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## What? No Stage for Poetry? How *Dark Beauty* Found a Stage Even in the Aisles

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AMERICAN theatre experts and the makers and students of the drama have recently been voicing controversial opinions and misgivings as to whether the average American audience is aesthetically prepared to appreciate poetic drama. Knowledge of the success of the poetry performances staged by the Poetry Playhouse of the University of Southern California at Los Angeles should convince even the hopelessly prosaic of the latent possibilities of this phase of dramatic art. And the response with which the summer Poetry Playhouse class of 1935 met in their superb though ever so briefly rehearsed production of *Dark Beauty*, a simple and effective preview presentation of poems portraying the joys and sorrows of the Negro race, can surely be interpreted as a marked advance on the part of the American public in the development of an appreciation for a drama consisting purely of poetic expression and dramatic interpretation. That a university audience is more or less high-brow and therefore offers no criterion for judgment of the masses is scarcely applicable here—even children

went into ecstasies over the performance, and the most strikingly favorable comments came from the Negroes themselves who had witnessed the production with whole-hearted enjoyment and true appreciation, and without apparent offense toward the white imitators who dared assume rôles characteristic of "the great black of the earth."

The poetry group responsible for the preview had only three weeks at most in which to plan and execute their work of art—their entire course in the staging of poetry covered a period of only six weeks, and scarcely even half that time was devoted to the actual interpretation of Negro poetry. Forty members were enrolled in the class, nearly all of whom were direct participants in the final presentation, and according to all the laws of averages not all the members could have been stage-craft professionals. As a matter of fact, many of them were merely students or teachers of dramatics, or directors of high school and college dramatic organizations, which makes it highly probable that some few may never have had so much as a lead in an amateur

performance. Moreover, at least one-third of the forty were men—by no means lilies of the field—who were interested in the oral and dramatic interpretation of poetry. Nevertheless the class, under the capable guidance of a professional supervisor, put their adventure in poetry over with all the booms of Vachel Lindsay's "Congo," and as a stage production it was a supreme success, enjoyable to young and old, whether poetry-minded or unschooled in the appreciation of poetic forms and rhythms.

The program, all in all a dramatic combination of choral verse speaking with simple group rhythmic response and dance movements, supplemented by (or perhaps more often supplementing) more elaborate individual dance interpretations at the points of convergence by the more talented members of the group, was essentially a mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous, very similar to the Negro idea of heaven as revealed in Connelly's *Green Pastures*. The cast was not limited to the use of the stage proper, but rather scattered along the side-lines and through the aisles, standing on soap-boxes against the walls, draped about the center and side columns, twined awkwardly around the branches of an artificial tree, or even lying prone on the floor—ready to rise with uplifted arms upon the slightest rhythmic provocation. When the doors of Touchstone Theatre were opened on the afternoon of the performance, the audience witnessed upon entrance the entire cast stationed at their proper points of vantage—living statues that hardly seemed to breathe for the entire half hour of patient waiting before Vachel Lindsay's Peter Jackson, clad in gay stripes of purple and white, initiated the performance with arms upstretched in fervent prayer—James Weldon Johnson's "Listen, Lord." With the line "Put perpetual motion into our (his) arms," the statues took new life, responding *en*

*masse* to the words with simple arm movements, and chiming in on the choral refrain "And set our tongues on fire." Then came an individual presentation of Lindsay's "When Peter Jackson Preached in the Old Church," by another outstanding figure of the cast, also a man, with whom the rest of the group again combined on the refrain "We all found Jesus at the break of day." The total scenic effect of bold sweeping lines and rhythmic mass movement that took shape with these simple choral refrains in unison can scarcely be imagined by the reader. The creations were never less than a Rivera masterpiece.

A woman next became the center of attraction with an interpretation of "Imitations of Negro Spirituals," from Harold T. Frasier's play *Lord Randal*, with his "Time I Went to Bethlehem" following, each of its six stanzas voiced and dramatized by individual stars with group response. Next came Rosamond Johnson's "I Wrestled Urd Satan," ending in one the "wrestler's" "A-pickin' up (one of) God's chillun" from the outer stage, marching out one stage entrance with her, and arriving in time and keeping with the refrain "Dey'll git home by and by" to deposit his charge heroically on the inner stage of Heaven—at the center of which three dark angels rested uncomfortably on their knees throughout the whole of the performance, impressively contributing an occasional "Glory, Halleluia!" as the spirit so moved them. The fortunate one of "God's chillun," a professional dancer, now went into Langston Hughes' "Song for a Banjo Dance" ("Shake yo' brown feet, honey") with as extravagant a gusto as Saintsbury would ever have dared. By way of contrast, Langston Hughes' "When Sue Wears Red" was placed next, with a choral refrain of "Sweet silver trumpets" followed by an individual interpretative dance to Carl Sandburg's "Mask," presented by a very

talented young woman who used with striking ingenuity a pliable pillar of roses to symbolize the poet's "red scarf."

Then came Hughes' "Danse Africaine," with the "low beating of the tomtoms" against a side wall, where the central figure, a young man of no meagre dramatic talent, beat convulsively against the wall, suddenly turned about and became at once mystified by the presence of a "golden-clad lady" whom he commanded to dance—and who did so, to the vocal accompaniment of the poem given individually by another member of the cast. Hughes' "Negro Dancers," featuring the Charleston-danced-by-two, furnished a hilarious break here, followed by the crowning glory of all the ludicrous elements in the entertainment—Fenton Johnson's "I Played on David's Harp," in the midst of which an angel clad in red thundered down the aisle from the rear of Touchstone Theatre—an angel seated comfortably and joyously in a wheelbarrow, leaning against a palm leaf that reached to the ceiling, shouting the line of the poem, "Glory, glory, halleluia!" This ridiculous effect naturally brought down the house, and it took no less than Hughes' "Dream Variation" to transform the tumultuous audience from laughter to tears.

An arrangement of Vachel Lindsay's "The Congo" was next in order, the interpretation heightened exquisitely by two individual stars who presented it both vocally and with superb dramatic gesture and dance movements, with the cake-walk initiated by two more stars of opposite sex who in the course of their revelry pranced off the stage at center front, down the center of the aisle, and back to the stage proper again. Gibson's "Cake-walk," danced by a Shawn pupil and "Thumped by a crook-backed (grizzled) Negro squatting" in the left aisle of the auditorium, followed; then Hughes' "Minstrel Man," as contrasted with J. D.

Johnson's "De Gospel Train" that reinstated the ridiculous—the "gospel train" represented by a child's miniature "skooter" fantastically colored according to the gaudy taste of the typical Negro. Hughes' "Ma Lord" afforded further dramatic contrast, followed by Newman's "I Got Shoes," the several stanzas featuring ludicrous individual presentations—with the aid of a pair of red beach shoes, a yellow silk robe, David's harp, and a scarlet derby. The familiar refrain "Goin' to walk all over God's Heb'm" was interpreted in chorus with rhythmic bodily movements in eloquent mass style. The national Negro hymn, "A Benediction," rendered by the incomparable Peter Jackson, with Albert Rice's "To a Black Madonna" as an afterlogue in choral refrain, closed this glorious adventure in staging a poetic drama of the blessed black of the earth. And the production was a triumphant success—thanks to the superb management and artistic vision of the magnetic personality behind the work, the co-founder and supervisor of the Poetry Playhouse (whose psychology rests on the assumption of a purely negativistic attitude toward everything in order to reap affirmative results. When asked what her course is like, she replies very elusively that it isn't worth the taking. Consequently, her classes are overcrowded. Rather than requiring that her assignments be executed, she implores her students not to bother about them. As a result, all members of her group do much more than she ever dreams of asking for. And outlines of her courses merely "invite" her students to contribute the plans, programs, and papers she suggests as being helpful in that particular line of work.)

But the purpose of this largely diagrammatical description of Southern California's Poetry Playhouse activities is merely to indicate that poetry of certain types can in the present age be effectively staged and appreciated by the average

# Choral Reading by Verse-Speaking Choirs

FLORENCE E. PIDGE

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TEACHERS of speech and of English are regarding what used to be called "concert recitation" in a new light. It has been discovered that there are many phases and varieties. Treatments of poetry unthought of in former days have pleased the ears of audiences to the same degree as have other forms of vocal arts.

A few words of explanation may help to make clear just what is meant by choric speech or verse-speaking. A group of speakers may be trained to recite poetry under leadership so as to produce a volume of tone, either loud or soft, dark or light, which cannot possibly be attained by a single voice. It is an artistic expression which is enjoyed by the most timid and untrained students because they often lose themselves in the crowd and then rediscover themselves in a new rôle with flexibility of tone, articulation, and power of oral interpretation undreamed of previous to the training.

There are many chances for experimentation in choral reading. Poems with a refrain give a solo voice an opportunity to take the leading part, the refrain being given by the group in unison. Two divisions may render an antiphonal work, the second or heavier division answering the first in response. Some poems lend themselves nicely to assignment of certain lines to the lighter voices and other lines to the darker voices. The choir may be divided into as many sections as the interpretation of the poem permits. Still other selections are beautiful when given entirely in unison. A skillful director will be able to

discriminate which ones are best adapted for the different treatments, and may also make some original contributions in arrangement.

Choral reading, when properly conducted, may be a great asset to classroom teaching. Both children and adults receive valuable training in breath control, enunciation, inflection, and timing. Aside from these mechanics they attain an agility in change of pitch, beautiful tone qualities to express shades of feeling, and the power to place stress in the proper places. These skills are dependent on individual mental alertness and mental co-operation of the group. Numerous variations may be introduced and the reciting of poetry becomes a part of the daily program to which the students look forward.

You ask, "Isn't it bound to revert to that dead, sing-songy type to which we were formerly subjected?" There will always be that danger against which to guard and also a tendency toward a sameness in the rendition of a group of poems, unless the conductor loves poetry and refuses to allow such degeneracy. His best remedy is a study with his group of the interpretation which the choir wishes to bring to its audience. The recital will not be dull when the members have learned to visualize the word-pictures of their repertoire. Some may gain the power they lack by acting occasionally as audience. When the images are clear to them, they may join the group and put themselves into the work with a new self-forgetfulness. The verse-speaking choir must have a real desire to make others see the mental



pictures, and to make the poems live for them by firing their imaginations with the new thoughts they convey.

Very rhythmic poetry seems advisable for beginners regardless of the age. Rote work may be necessary, too, sometimes, but expression brought out by suggestion, discussion of meaning, and questioning is by far the most permanent and is also transferable to future situations.

Short stanzas may be used as exercises for developing breathing, accurate pronunciation of vowels and consonants, and the pause. It is not out of place here to say that without *pause*, or that silence which should precede each new thought or different phase of the same thought the voice will have little or no inflection. Exercises involving the problem of pronouncing words beginning with the same letter are always advisable and usually necessary. No poorly articulated exercises should go uncorrected. A few short selections which are worthy of being learned and which also present very good problems are: "The Little Elf," by John Kendrick Bangs; "The Icicle," by Mrs. N. G. Gale; "Requiem," by Robert Louis Stevenson; "Ye Stars," by Lord Byron; and "Follow the Gleam" and "Crossing the Bar," by Tennyson.

The writer has worked with verse-speaking choirs of primary, intermediate, and college levels. All ages enjoyed both the rehearsal and the performance before an audience. The following poems were

especially interesting to the younger children: "The Potatoes' Darse" and "The Mysterious Cat," by Vachel Lindsay; "The Duel" and "The Sugar-Plum Tree," by Eugene Field; "The Owl and the Pussy-Cat" and "The Duck and the Kangaroo," by Edward Lear. These give opportunities for group divisions, solos, unison work, and cumulative effects. The results are most gratifying.

The same numbers are always good for older groups, too. A few examples of poems which may be interpreted by older groups with pleasure and success are: "The Bugle Song" and "New Year's Eve," by Alfred Tennyson; "The Ladies of St. James" and "Tu Quoque," by Austin Dobson; "Up Hill," by Christina Rossetti; "The Erl-King," by Goethe; "The Rose and the Gardener," by Austin Dobson; "The Lost Sheep," by Elizabeth Clephane; and "Waken, Lords and Ladies Gay," by Sir Walter Scott.

You may be thinking, "What value is there in verse-speaking after the group has dispersed?" Some few members of verse-speaking choirs continue to interpret literature for others after they have left the class. Others have gained a new love for poetry or had a taste of a speech art which was a satisfying experience. Still others have simply enjoyed the fellowship of a social group. In our day of progressive education is not any one of these outcomes of sufficient importance to warrant giving choral reading a trial?

# Folk Songs and Folk Lore\*

FRANCES TAYLOR MONROE

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I WISH to suggest in this paper that folk music and folk tales be correlated in helping develop the child in a socialized way. Few people realize the relative value of folk tales as an important form of literature, or the popularity of the folk songs, although some of our larger communities have organized clubs to encourage the appreciation and love for folk music.

In teaching a unit centered around folk tales and folk songs of different countries, the teacher may begin by discussing the origin of these two forms of folk art.

How do folk songs or folk tales come to be? It is easy to imagine that there may be musically gifted persons far removed from the culture of advanced civilization, knowing nothing of laws or rules or symbols having to do with the making of music, yet possessed of creative ability, which in response to emotional experience expresses itself in spontaneous melody. This melody may be seized upon by other singers who hearing it, pass it on with changes of more or less importance until finally it attains a fairly permanent form.

It is easy for us to believe that some of the folk music of the various nationalities has come into existence in just this way; and that some of it was at its first appearance so perfect in its simplicity that it has been altered slightly through the years.

Folk music is like the people who make it. If people have suffered from tyranny or from long gloomy winters of ice and

snow, the sadness of their lives creeps right into their songs. If people are bold and dashing, or sad and oppressed, or tender and loving, or dreamy and romantic, the same spirit is in their music. Folk music is like a mirror held up to the people; it gives back a true reflection of what they are. Folk music reflects the customs and disposition of a nation. Each country has a disposition or a temperament all its own. The temperament of a country is made of the feelings, thoughts, deeds, and customs of its people. Folk music always shows very clearly the nationality of the folk who made it. Here are some of the little phrases that belong to certain countries: La Belle France, Merrie England, Castles in Spain, Magic Ireland, Sunny Italy, Dark Russia.

After this discussion by the teacher, I would have group discussion. Ask the following questions to arouse the pupils' interest: What are folk tales? How do they originate? Tell your favorite folk tale. These questions will no doubt cause children to ask other questions.

## *English Folk Lore*

Reflecting the calm life in England, we find in the music of England a certain security and comfort, wholesomeness and healthiness. This is illustrated by the following:

- (a) "Three Little Pigs" from Carolyn Bailey's *Every Child's Folk Songs and Games*. Dramatization of this song would be great fun for fourth graders. Story and folk song found their inspiration in England at about the same time.
- (b) "My Pretty Maid," *Hollis Dann*, Book Six.
- (c) "The Tree in the Wood," *Hollis Dann*, Book Five.

\* Prepared under the direction of Miss Ida O. Rudy, instructor in Methods in Literature, Wittenberg College, Springfield, Ohio.

- (d) Have the following poems read: "Milking Time," by Rossetti; "Owl and the Pussy Cat," by Edward Lear.
- (e) Fable from a comic opera, *The Yeoman of the Guard*, by Gilbert and Sullivan.

In connection with the last song I would have a short discussion of the fable. The pupils should learn that the fable is a less common form of traditional literature, probably developed from the earlier beast tales. Fables were told to illustrate some situation in human affairs, with the hope that the listener would see the application. They developed in Greece and in India. Discuss in what way they are different from folk tales. You might have a few of the better fables told.

### Germany

The people of Germany are great lovers of music, and prefer music of high standard. There is solidity in music of Germany. More composers have come from Germany than from any other country; Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Handel, Brahms, Weber, Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Straus and Wagner are some of the outstanding ones.

- (a) "Honey Bee," from *Progressive Music Series*, page 245, Teachers Manual.
- (b) "Little Sister's Lullaby"—*Progressive Music Series*, page 206.
- (c) "The Postman"—*Progressive Music Series*, page 190.
- (d) "Songs of Columbus"—*Music Hour*, page 16.
- (e) "Growing Wool"—*Music Hour*, page 29.
- (f) "Snow Birds"—*Music Hour*, page 66.

In connection with this study of Germany, I think it would be interesting to correlate literature and dramatic art. Children love the story of "Hansel and Gretel," and at this age are quite familiar with it. Have some one give the story. Children will love to dramatize this.

Dr. E. Humperdinck, a great composer, has written an opera about Hansel and Gretel which is one of the best liked op-

eras ever written. He has woven many old folk songs into his work.

Many schools have given this opera; pupils enjoy reproducing it. But even if not produced, the children may build small-scale "scenes" for each of the three acts: first in home of the wood cutter; second, in the woods; third for the part of the opera which is sung in the Gingerbread House. These scenes might be made of cardboard, or on a sand table. It is surprising how work of this sort will create enthusiasm and interest in pupils who may not be overly enthusiastic in music or literature.

For appreciation, play following Victor records: Record #31853—Prelude *Hansel and Gretel*; Record #64188—The Witches' Ride.

### France

French music is unusually graceful and full of style. French composers are always concerned with the dress of their notes, so naturally their expression is more subtle, vivacious, emotional and sentimental. A few of the composers are Massenet, Ravel, Debussy, Delibes, Bizet, Thomas, Saint Saëns.

- (a) "Tame Fish"—*Hollis Dann*, Book Four.
- (b) "By the Light of the Moon"—*Hollis Dann*, Book Four.
- (c) "Long Live the Roses"—*Hollis Dann*, Book Six.
- (d) "Wooden Shoes"—*Hollis Dann*, Book Four.
- (e) "Now the Sun is Sinking"—*Progressive Music Series*, page 237.
- (f) "The Little Huntsman"—*Progressive Music Series*, page 210.

### Scandinavia

The rigorous winters of Norway and Sweden develop certain rugged characteristics in the people there. This is reflected in their music and makes it contrast decidedly with the lilting and carefree songs of sunny Italy. Grieg, one of the greatest poet composers of recent times, brought

out the beauties of the Norwegian folk song and dance and dressed up serious music in national costume. His *Peer Gynt Suite* is an illustration of Scandinavian music which is noted for its strong sense of melody.

- (a) Have pupils read as a supplementary reading lesson, the story of Peer Gynt, as given in *Music Stories for Boys and Girls*, by Cross.
- (b) Play record #78404, "Norway, my Norway" a Norwegian folk song.
- (c) Read—"Peer Gynt Music" from *Music Appreciation Readers*, Book Four, by Hazel Gertrude Kinsella.
- (d) "Greeting Song" from *Every Child's Folk Songs* by Carolyn Sherwin Bailey.
- (e) "Songs of Sweden"—*Music Hour*, page 138.
- (f) "What Everyone Knows"—*Music Hour*, page 66.
- (g) "Home from the Saeter"—*Foresman*, Book Six, page 149.
- (h) "Snowbirds"—*Music Hour*, Book Four, page 65.

### America

In America, where so many races mingle, you can collect folk music of all nations. In the southern Appalachian mountains where the people are descended from British settlers of long ago and have not mingled much with other people because the mountains cut them off, the folk songs are still much the same as you find in England or Scotland.

- (a) *Uncle Remus Tales* by Joel Chandler Harris. These are considered the only real American Folk Tales.
- (b) Some of our best known folk songs are "Old Folks at Home," "Dixie," and "Old Black Joe."
- (c) *American Folk Poetry* by E. Ehrlich Smith Poetry

American Folk Song by Walt Whitman  
The Invitation Song  
Corn Grinding Song  
Hymn to the Sun

- (d) Review test as given on page 558 of above book.

If time would permit we could take up Irish, Russian, Italian, and Bohemian music.

### Things for the Pupil to Do

1. Play or get somebody to play for you, a lot of folk tunes from some song book, and find out how each tune is made. This exercise is important; it will teach you how to listen.

2. Get into your head as many good folk tunes as you can, so that you will always have something jolly to sing or whistle. This will help make you musical. Some of the country people in England know as many as three hundred or four hundred old tunes. How many can you learn or remember?

3. Play or listen to a good many Scottish tunes, and see if you can find out from them what sort of people the Scots were. Then do same with the tunes of the English, Irish, Welsh or any other nation.

4. Get somebody to teach you a folk dance, or if you cannot do this, make up your own little dance to one of the folk tunes in a song book.

5. Find a really interesting folk song that tells a story and then get some friend to act it with you, while some one sings the song.

6. Discover any other ways of getting some fun out of folk tunes and tell the class about them.



# Contemporary Poetry for Children

WALTER BARNES

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(Continued from January)

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the first installment, which appeared in the January issue, Dr. Barnes developed the thesis, "Good poetry for children is good poetry which is good for children." In that issue he discussed also the poetry of Elizabeth Madox Roberts. In this, and subsequent installments, Dr. Barnes considers the children's verse of various other present-day writers.

## WINIFRED WELLES

With more variety in mood and verse technique, but also with less consistent creative poetic power, Miss Winifred Welles has about the same quality and appeal, the same tug at the heart as Miss Roberts. In her slender volume, *Skiping Along Alone*<sup>a</sup>—a charming title—I find at least two poems which should be set in special niches.

### GREEN MOTH

The night the green moth came for me,  
A creamy moon poured down the hill,  
The meadow seemed a silver sea,  
Small pearls were hung in every tree,  
And all so still, so still . . .

He floated in on my white bed,  
A strange and soundless fellow.  
I saw the horns wave on his head,  
He stepped across my pillow  
In tiny ermine boots, and spread  
His cape of green and yellow.

He came so close that I could see  
His golden eyes, and sweet and chill,  
His faint breath wavered over me.  
"Come Child, my Beautiful," said he  
And all so still, so still. . . .

<sup>a</sup> *Skiping Along Alone*, by Winifred Welles. Published by the Macmillan Company, 1931. Verses quoted here are used by permission of the publishers.

Here is accuracy of observation, beauty of phrase, and delicacy of fancy, a plangent, muffled music, and a touch of mystery. For the green moth comes *for* the child and lures him away in the stillness. The only technical flaw is the employment of the feminine rhythm in the second stanza. This is not the place nor time for gayety!

But not, I believe, since the poems of Walter de la Mare have I known a child's poem as hauntingly beautiful as

### THE ANGEL IN THE APPLE TREE

Early in the morning, before the day began,  
Out along the hillside, glittering and cold,  
And down into the orchard that was all dim gold,  
Barefoot, and by myself, breathlessly I ran.

There I saw an Angel resting in an apple tree,  
A lovely, silver Person up among the leaves—  
From deep in the folds of one of her blue sleeves  
She took a yellow apple, and she dropped it down  
to me.

I clasped my hands around it, I lifted up my eyes  
To smile at her and thank her, but already she  
was gone.

I stood among the grasses very still and all  
alone—  
While the green leaves rustled and the sun began  
to rise.

Maybe the higher critics would contend that the child just fancied he saw the angel; he hadn't had his breakfast, so was in the mood for a vision; or perhaps his running till he was out of breath had dazed his senses; or the dim gold light of dawn played tricks with his eye-sight. No matter; "It seemed and there it was."

The Angel was there, that lovely, silver Person; she had probably been angeling it on some other planet, and, benighted, was resting in the apple tree. The boy had his yellow apple as assurance of that brief memorable experience, and we have the poem. It is full of colors, full of movement and pauses. The metre is dactylic, but artfully varied. Note the emphatic spondees: "dim gold," "blue sleeves." Note how, in the last line of the first stanza, the little boy runs, then stops, runs, then stops, and note how long it takes the Angel to get the apple, "From deep in the folds of one of her blue sleeves." Read the lines slowly and hear the pleasant combinations of sounds.—A beautiful poem, recording a golden moment, worth hundreds of fribbling, "really-for-sure" poems of the nursery and scores of pretty-pretty poems about elves and fairies.

There are a few fairies in *Skipping Along Alone*, but not the conventional "nice" creatures that disport themselves in many children's poems. The fairy that sits "In a hole of the heel of an old brown stocking," the one in the bubble, and Minim the gnome are, to employ the child's vocabulary, "nasty, ugly old things," conceived and presented with vigor and vividness and broad hints of grotesquerie.

To offset those excursions into the whimsical are a few scenes of strict reality. "Old Ellen Sullivan," the washer woman, "Aunt Eliza's Slow Ear," "Green Grass and White Milk," and "The Man with a Little Pleated Piano" are among the best of these. They are accurate in observation, sprightly in movement, and varied in structure and style, with effective, picture-making, music-making words and phrases. It is good poetry, but to my way of thinking below the level of the fanciful and the fearful in Miss Welles' volume—below the level, for example, of

"Runaway Fountain" or "Hoppergrass; His Funeral." This latter poem, by the way, is quite in the spirit, if not in the fly-away rhythm, of William Roscoe's "Butterfly's Ball" (published in 1807), one of the earliest children's poems in this genre, and it has something of the grace and beauty of some of the fairy scenes in *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the humorous sadness of the folk-song "The Death and Burial of Cock Robin." It begins:

Sir Hoppergrass was found, feet up,  
Stark still within a daisy cup—  
So Undertaker Cricket brought  
His black and golden hearse, all wrought  
Of hornet's wings, and tenderly  
This emerald form, so slenderly,  
So featly fashioned, neatly made,  
They took, lamenting, and they laid  
With dewy sorrow in his grave.

By all the criteria, impact, import, technique, and children's interest—Winfred Welles ranks among the few notable modern poets for children. Even her scenes of factual life have more than two dimensions, and certainly her experiences with the mysteries and the super-rational, presented with such charming assurance and exquisite art, are among the finest poems in the children's anthology.

#### FRANCES FROST

Frances Frost's latest volume,<sup>4</sup> falls within the purview of this study, since that volume carries the sub-title "For Young and Old," since it is dedicated to six boys and girls, and since a few of the poems are explicitly designed for certain of these children. It may be also that the poems in this collection have a more direct simplicity in theme and mood than those in Miss Frost's poems for adults, somewhat more transparency and lucidity. But if so, it is a matter of degree, for

<sup>4</sup> *Pool in the Meadow*, published by Houghton Mifflin, 1933. Poems by Miss Frost are quoted by permission of and special arrangement with the Houghton Mifflin Company.

these are precisely the qualities which have always characterized Miss Frost's poetry.

At any rate, this volume contains much beautiful poetry for older children. Whether intended primarily for children or not, here is no condescension, no disparagement of the child's powers of apprehension, no stooping to conquer. It is Frances Frost at her finest; and at her finest she ranks high among contemporary American lyricists. Her poetry is the record of the first-hand, deeply felt experiences of a sensitive, sensuous personality in search of beauty, expressed in unaffected, restrained, limpid verse. Perhaps it is too restrained and apparently effortless, and certainly there is some monotony of subject and feeling: too much absorption in the bland, delicate aspects of nature, not enough headlong, gusty passion, not enough wrestling with the demons, or the angels. But one can read other poets for that. And assuredly Miss Frost is wise in using only that which is grist for her own mill, and assuredly her temperament makes her an admirable poet for the child—and the childlike.

In *Pool in the Meadow* I like especially the title poem, "Last Outpost," "Autumn Wood," "Windy Night," "Night of Wind," "Apple Song," "Strawberries," "Before Storm" (so vividly descriptive in words and so suggestive in the broken rhythm), "Coast Farm," "River Boatman" (one of the few poems about persons, and even this a nature-piece), "Morning," "June Morning," "Rainy Morning," "Silver Morning," and "Verities" (this last a poetic catalog of "remembered fragrances," ending in a magical line, "And the slow, dark, untroubled scent of sleep.")

Resisting the temptation to quote some of these, I present two other poems, the first for its imagery, its phrasing, and its music:

#### SQUIRREL

Colored like fallen needles, the red squirrel goes  
Swiftly over the wood's ground, swiftly under  
The thin and beautiful rain. As a light wind blows  
Parting the grass, when he runs with the delicate  
thunder

Of rain on his fur, the blade and the flower's stem  
Stir lightly as if a ghost-squirrel troubled them.

And the second because it comes as close as Miss Frost's poems ever do to carrying an ethical burden and interpreting the evasive ideal of the poet.

#### STONY ACRE

What can an acre of granite give  
In harvest, save the stout-set walls  
That keep calves in and orchards out  
And divide the hills from their waterfalls?

What can an acre of granite yield  
Save roughened hands and a stubborn heart  
And pride in a man who likes each field  
Squared and bounded and set apart?

Certainly this is not the poetry for children which appears in the magazines for children and for primary teachers, the jouncy, jaunty, perky, gay-colored poetic toys for tiny tots. Miss Frost is pensive, serene, and reticent, and her art is subdued and muted; all the more reason that some of her poems should have a high and secure place in the affections of children.

#### MARY AUSTIN

Mary Austin's *The Children Sing in the Far West*<sup>5</sup> contains a dozen or more beautiful and unusual poems for children. Perhaps the best things are translations or adaptations from the Indians, and from among these stands out "A Song of Greatness" from the Chippewa:

When I hear the old men  
Telling of heroes,  
Telling of great deeds  
Of ancient days,  
When I hear that telling  
Then I think within me  
I too am one of these.

<sup>5</sup> Published by Houghton Mifflin, 1928. Poems are quoted by permission of and special arrangement with the publishers.

When I hear the people  
Praising great ones,  
Then I know that I too  
Shall be esteemed,  
I too when my time comes  
Shall do mightily.

This is direct, candid, and exalted, yet restrained and dignified, with a primitive naïveté most engaging.

As would be expected, Mary Austin's characteristic certitude of her mystic kinship with earth and earth's creations, her cosmic feeling reveal themselves in her poetry. She affirms ("The Christmas Fir"):

Whatever has root in the earth believes  
That the earth works only good.

This confident "reading of earth" is expressed in her "Charm for Walking."

As I walk . . . as I walk . . .  
The universe is walking with me . . .  
Beautifully . . . it walks before me,  
Beautifully . . . it walks behind . . .  
Beautifully on every side . . .  
As I walk . . . I walk in beauty.

Her interest in tribal wisdom and superstitions is manifested in "Dead Water," the first stanza of which is:

At midnight drink no water,  
For I have heard said  
That on the stroke of midnight  
All water goes dead.

The imagery of her poems is that of the West and especially the Southwest. Here are the rattlesnake, the sandhill crane, the mountain sheep, the brown bear, and the shrubs and trees and scenes of the land in which Mrs. Austin spent much of her life. It is presented accurately and lovingly, but seldom with the magical lyricism and the felicitous, inevitable phrasing to be found in great poetry. Here is perhaps the finest song in her book.

#### AT CARMEL

There are people go to Carmel  
To see the blue bay pass  
Through green wave to white foam  
Like snow on new grass

But I go to hear the auklets crying  
Like dark glass on glass.

I go to hear the herons talk  
The way that herons have, half asleep,  
As they came in past Carmel bar  
With a slow wing sweep;  
To hear the wood teams jingling up from Sûr,  
And the contented blether of the Mission sheep.

When Mrs. Austin writes specifically and self-consciously for children, she is rarely at her best. Occasionally she steps lumberingly out of character and is jocular and arch. She is a child's poet because generally she is genuine, simple, beneficent, and sensitive yet healthy, and because as an element in her wide-sweeping understanding, she respects childhood. She has something of Blake's mysticism and something of Celia Thaxter's robust sanity; but because she was always a unique personality, she has added a few original poems to the children's storehouse, poems which she alone could have made.

#### RACHEL FIELD

Rachel Field is highly endowed and richly experienced in writing for children. In my judgment her poetry is superior to her stories, even to *Hitty*: and those parts of her stories are superior in which she is most descriptive, meditative, and imaginative. She has been writing too much for children, been bending her mind too steadily toward them; it is good to find in her last volume, *Branches Green*, many poems not aimed too pointedly at children—and for that very reason probably all the better as children's poems.

*Taxis and Toadstools*<sup>\*</sup> is the collection which made Miss Field known among children and lovers of children's poetry. It has perhaps as many admirable poems for children as any volume of original verse of these last ten years. Her poems have variety of theme, attitude, and treatment; they are well within the compass

<sup>\*</sup> Copyright, 1926, by Doubleday, Doran. Selections from this volume are quoted by permission.



of children's experiences and yet do not condescend and patronize (I'd like to coin a word: "matronize"), they do not alienate the adult's respect nor affront the children's self-respect.

As the title would imply, this collection includes poems based upon city scenes and incidents. Here are the flower-cart man, the sandwich man, the blind beggar, the ice-cream and the pretzel-vendor; here are scenes at the theater, at chestnut-stands, in the florist's shop, and the toy shop, the animal store, and even at the bank—a most unpromising spot to find a poem! Here is reality, but reality made poetry—though alas! not always—by the child's fancy, curiosity, freshness of vision, his sentience and sensibility. The blind man who "smiles at something all to himself"; the florists,

Quiet men and kind  
With a sort of fragrance of the mind.

The uneasy impression that parrots' beady eyes give you;

They stare and shine, they shine and stare.  
And you must stand before them there  
And feel there's nothing in your mind  
A wise old parrot couldn't find.

The indescribable pity for the sandwich men:

There's something about Sandwich Men  
That makes me want to cry;  
Not just because they're mostly old  
And dreary round the eye,  
Or stooped between those painted boards  
Their shoulders carry high,  
It's something that you seem to feel  
When Sandwich Men go by.

In all these situations and many others there are the seeing eye and the sensitive, responsive heart, and, in most instances, the moving, unstudied utterance suggestive of the childlike idiom.

But if the city poems constitute Rachel Field's most distinctive contribution, they are not necessarily her best creations. Her poems on the "critters" and flowers, on

the sea and sea-shore are equally fine. She has added the island to the poetical domains of children. There's a fanciful thing:

All the islands have run away  
From the land which is their mother;

and the solemn assurance that

If once you have slept on an island  
You'll never be quite the same.

and the grass-plot island at the road intersection which the child-explorer has landed upon:

The cars flash by and the hay carts pass  
Like ships on a long brown sea  
And the folk aboard them smile and nod  
And wave their hands to me.

—Well, there *is* something about an island.

Miss Field does not often write of fairies and goblins and creatures of that brood, but in the section which she calls "Fringes of Fairyland" are two poems I admire: "The Elf Tree," which begins

Whenever I pass a gnarly tree  
I knock my knuckles three times three  
My heart beats fast in case it should  
Be the right tree in all that wood.

and "The Secret Land," reminiscent of Walter de la Mare, which has the true magic. It begins:

Where the tallest tree trunks stand,  
I found a green and russet land  
Of criss-cross root and toadstool tree  
And vines that twisted cunningly  
Round sunken doors to hidden falls.

I could wish that Miss Field had not been content with the careless, shoddy workmanship which mars many of her poems; the unnatural inversions, the padding, the lusterless prosaic phrases, the colloquialisms, the doggerel anapests; and in her latest collection<sup>7</sup> I find her technique much more nearly perfect. In "Snow by Night," in "Family Pew," in "Anniversary," in "A Northwest

<sup>7</sup> *Branches Green*, published by Macmillan, 1934.

# "The Larger Heart, the Kindlier Hand"\*

BERTHA GUNTERMAN

*Editor, Children's Book Department  
Longmans, Green and Company, New York City*

NOTHING seems so important, today, as tolerance, right thinking about peace and trying to understand other peoples. With war clouds blackening all around us on the horizon, the sense of helplessness and futility deepens until one is almost overwhelmed by despair. And yet more than ever must one, who feels that peace is absolutely essential to the welfare of his own country and the preservation of our civilization, stand against the increasing drift toward another catastrophe such as that which ended only seventeen short years ago.

It is heartening here in the United States to find that, in spite of their own grave troubles and problems, many people want first-hand information of what is going on in Europe and elsewhere. I found the same inquiring mind about other lands in parts of Europe also. Each returning traveller is met with eager questioning from stay-at-homes who are disturbed by newspaper accounts, confused by prejudice, tired of propaganda, stories pro and anti this or that. Even when what one has to say is not welcome, a frank, unbiased personal opinion is listened to and an honest discussion follows.

That keen interest strengthens my growing feeling—it is stronger than an impression—that among the vast percentage of people, which in all countries is least considered, if not entirely ignored,

when one speaks or writes of a nation, is forming a body of public opinion strongly opposed to war. I am very hesitant about any expression of my own conclusions, there is too much complexity in all countries to allow one to be glib in talking about them, but I think I have seen something of these people.

Early in the morning and late in the evening I have mingled with the crowds. I have travelled on their local boats and trains, and been the only outlander on the conveyance taking some group for an outing. It gives one an entirely new viewpoint to slip into a church in the cold gray dawn and watch a country's workers alone with their God. There is a salutary humbling of spirit in watching them intent upon the mysteries of that early morning service, so oblivious of others are they that one is ashamed to be an observer. Then, following the congregation out, to find many a one buying from an old woman on the church steps a cup of milk to make more palatable his crust or roll of hard bread. A few such visits will give one a much needed perspective and are a good antidote to judgments of travellers in first and second class compartments.

Living in Europe, seeing much of all classes of people, one cannot help coming to the conclusion that if the peoples were let alone, were not continually stirred up with propaganda, the problems which beset them internationally would solve themselves. All of them have internal problems enough, and if those who

\* This article is one of a series prepared under the direction of the Book Evaluation Committee of the Section for Library Work with Children of the American Library Association, Miss Gladys English, Chairman.

think only of their present personal power and nothing of the real future of Europe could be induced to fade out of the picture, maybe only a generation or two would be needed to bring international amity instead of the sort of anarchy the world has known and endured so long.

There were many bright flashes to lighten the surrounding gloom in Europe. One that seemed tremendously significant last autumn was the French revolt against anti-German propaganda. I met numbers of French travellers in Germany, very frank in saying they were out to see for themselves, tired of the bitter hatred expressed in their newspapers and by their public men. Good ordinary common people—the middle class that is said to be the backbone of a nation. That this could happen with a people who were never known as great travellers is, one hopes, evidence that public opinion favoring a new policy in France has been inarticulate but not nonexistent.

It had not seemed so apparent on this last visit of mine that a whole generation was missing, just hadn't been there, until in February and March last year in Italy. Then the overwhelming sense of the loss that the last war bequeathed to all the countries was borne in on one—how pitifully young most of the men were in the troops marching off to Africa and their accolade of death!

Watching the boys called up for training and replacing the regiments sent off, standing for hours to see the dress parades, one was forced to sense and know what the spectators, as well as the boys themselves, felt. When the rookies came up, rough country lads, others from the cities and towns, they would try to sing. The song would gain a little in volume as a voice here or there joined in, then suddenly they would all die away again. These boys just did not want to be in the army, to add to the great toll taken by war. I have heard a lot about the enthu-

siasm for the war—it was totally lacking among the soldiers and spectators in Florence. When a Florentine in the lines of marching men passed a group of his friends among the onlookers, he was cheered and acknowledged the acclaim with a salute. How anxiously the people read the government posters and bulletins on the streets, all this time while the League of Nations was silent.

In Germany, the women haven't forgotten the eight or nine million children who died of starvation in the last war, little victims of the blockade. There is no monument to them—martyrs as surely as any soldier who dies in battle. But somehow the Germans haven't been afraid to list the appalling number of their dead by name on the monuments to those who fell in the last war. Would they if the *people* were so set on a new war? On the great memorial in Munich—which corresponds to the "Unknown Soldier's Grave" elsewhere—are engraved the thirteen thousand, more or less, names of Muencheners who failed to return when the war was over. I can still grow cold with horror over that expensive monstrosity many people rave over in Edinburgh, but Scotland has another memorial to offset that monumental pile on Castle Hill, a simple shaft bearing two words only—They Died. There is another I have seen which expresses what I think we should feel about war. In St. Stephen's cathedral in Vienna, a small marble bas-relief on the wall is a memorial to the Austrian dead in the war. It shows a dying soldier holding his dead comrade, gazing up to see in the sky a cross crowned by a wreath of thorns. It sounds macabre; it isn't. But the Viennese, when they gaze at the exquisite delicacy of its sculpture, must think of the irony of their position; of the independence of their country "protected" by the very nations which despoiled her.

I didn't go to Vienna this past year; I

couldn't in face of what has happened, remembering the joy with which the enthusiasts at the Board of Education there had shown me, on a former visit, the new books for children, how at last there was to be a new national and world order brought about through the new generation. And that brings me to what this article was to have been about; the help books can give in forming judgments; in helping one to know what people are like, what they think and actually believe about themselves; in preventing loose thinking and looser talking; in aiding us to rid ourselves of our beams and motes.

Reading for fun was the best motif we have ever had for Book Week; why did it take us ten years to realize? It is an idea I hope will continue to be a motivating force in the future. One should read what interests him or entertains him. That does not mean necessarily that books should be too light or frivolous, or of no lasting value. On the contrary, reading for fun can be at the same time a widening of horizons, a deepening of spirit, a furthering of ability to compare and judge with the sympathy only wide knowledge can give. And perhaps books are a better factor even than travel in widening our horizons. In either case one's mind must not be completely closed by prejudice or preconceived judgments. One can usually find what he seeks, but an open mind is the first requisite for receiving full value for the effort expended.

Even if no book can give one such completeness of satisfaction as being actually on the ground, it may be a much less fatiguing way of gaining knowledge of another land. And how vitally important books can be, especially when it comes to interpreting peoples and events! Records of travelers, their impressions, their judgments and enthusiasms, can surely be helpful in one's own development, however much one may deplore reading instead of seeing for himself. But there are

authors whose perceptions are so sensitive, whose integrity is so unquestionable, that the narrative they give us may make us see with a vision of the mind so vivid that often we see more clearly than with our own eyes.

An outstanding example of open-mindedness, of willingness to learn by seeking the truth, is found in Walter Duranty. Those who were attracted by his first dispatches from Russia have followed his changing point of view, his final convictions on the political situations there and elsewhere in changing Europe. The title of his recently published book, *I Write as I Please*, (November, 1935) is not just a smart catch phrase, but an announcement to the world of readers that here is the product of ripened thought, honesty, and desire that others may see clearly what he has seen and judge for themselves.

There are authors who can give us the thrill of a sort of spiritual adventure, a feeling of being in on the processes of thought that result in the forming of reasoned judgment set forth in the book. An example of this quality, which makes reading as thrilling as any physical adventure, is to be found in the writings of such authors as Vincent Sheehan and Stefan Zweig. Their books are not at all alike in content or subject matter, but they are alike in their beautiful clarity of thought. Reading Sheehan's *Personal History*, the alert reader can follow the changes that take place in the author's mind and know just why he comes to the conclusions that he does. That same sense of being party to the mental processes is present also for many in the books of Stefan Zweig. Another book, new last autumn, is *My Country and My People*. How one wishes that the service done China in this book could be equalled in writings on other countries where much of the current knowledge is false or distorted. Even if one does, in the end, dis-



agree with the author's conclusions, the reading of such books is stimulating and broadening.

Fiction may be a more pleasant means of enlarging the vision. Even where the group of characters is not familiar to us, if the author has given them the actual substance of flesh and blood we follow their adventures with keen interest to the very end that we may know all that happened to them. Can you ever forget the hopelessness, the wondering helpless bewilderment of Sergeant Grischa caught in the relentless red tape of officialdom? In three American books, *Deep Dark River*, *South Moon Under*, and in a long short story, *Let the Hurricane Roar*, there can be no doubt the characters are real. Their hopes, passions, struggles are important and of interest as an integral part of the tapestry of American life.

Now what has this to do with children's reading? Only this: give them books, the widest range in subject, with-

out preaching or coercion. Let them read about children like themselves, and also about other children not so fortunate; give their minds a chance to form independent judgments. There are many fine books for them now on the publishers' lists. The next generation must know how to think. In Germany and Spain and Italy, today, the point that stands out clearest is that you couldn't judge what a person thought about present conditions from his position or background. Class distinctions are disappearing; in political and social matters one finds young aristocrats side by side with members of the newer orders and sometimes laborers and small shopkeepers in the reactionary groups. What is coming? Are we not, perhaps, in the midst of tremendous social change—as far reaching as the end of feudal days—and we who live through the days almost as unconscious of impending events as the French aristocrats before the revolution?

## CONTEMPORARY POETRY FOR CHILDREN

(Continued from page 53)

Window," in "Gunga," in "The Old Music Box" the style more closely approaches the level of the mood and subject, though the exact, revealing phrase is not frequently found even here, the phrase which we utter over and over for sheer delight in its savor, to "make its English sweet upon our tongue."

Most of the poems in Rachel Field's earlier volumes are in the first person

singular style, the "I" being the child. It is a little girl speaking most of the time; but though feminine, the poetry is not sissified; the poet makes no attempt to curry favor by talking down. Based on children's experiences and couched in language not too mature, the poetry often sounds overtones, often lifts and leads far, far away—it "goes somewhere and means something."

# A Bibliography of Unpublished Studies in Elementary School English, 1925-1934

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH OF  
THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RESEARCH IN  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENGLISH

JOSEPHINE MACLATCHY, *Chairman*

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(Concluded from January)

EDITOR'S NOTE: The first installment of Miss MacLatchy's report appeared in the December, 1935, issue of *THE REVIEW*. In it, Miss MacLatchy gave the bibliography of the studies she analyzes here. Parenthetical numbers following the names of authors refer to studies in this bibliography.

## *Intermediate Grades (Continued)*

### GRAMMAR

The detailed examination of 143 textbooks on English grammar published from 1901 to 1930 led Miss Macmillan (49) to formulate what in her opinion were the objectives of teaching English grammar:

- Formation of habits of correct use.
- Ability to construct sentences correctly and to punctuate them wisely.
- Eradication of faulty language habits.
- Thinking which is more effectively organized.
- Speech that is more effective and more easily understood by others.
- Expression improved.
- Preparation for foreign language.

She found but one opinion common to all the authors—that the sentence be introduced in grade one. Mr. Schlaugh (62) found in his analysis of the courses of study in 32 states that all were unanimous in the statement that grammar is to be used only as a means to an end, and that only those forms are to be included which

will aid in the improvement of language habits. Miss Stanley (65) analyzed the state-adopted textbooks in use in Alabama in 1910, 1924, and 1930. She found the amount of space devoted to grammar, to sentences, and to paragraphing much less in 1930 than in 1910. The 1930 books suggested work based on the children's own experience rather than the learning of rules and definitions.

Miss Johnson (42) found that the most common error among 77 pupils from grade seven was the confusion of forms, while with 68 eighth grade pupils faulty connectives were most common; both groups agreed in "incomplete tense forms," and in using "dependent elements independently," as the third and fourth most common errors. When the pupils were asked to read their themes aloud, 29% of the errors made in the seventh grade and 20% in the eighth grade were corrected. Practically no relation was found by Mr. Roberts (59) between excellence in composition and chronological age; some, but not great, relationship between excellence in composition and mental age; but the most significant factor was grade in school.

Miss Horton (37) outlined a course of study based upon the "integration of English with pupils' needs and experiences."

She distinguished between oral and written English throughout. Her course was constructed after the examination of many textbooks and courses of study. Mr. Miner (52) endeavored to find out the status of language teaching in the elementary schools in the United States by examining 88 courses of study and by checking them against the opinions of certain authorities in the teaching of English and with the findings of an analysis of certain textbooks. He found little uniformity of opinion among makers of courses of study, the writers of textbooks, and the authorities on the subject. He drew up twelve abilities which he thought should be mastered in the elementary school English. They were:

1. To write ordinary business and friendship letters.
2. To use the punctuation marks and capital letters needed in ordinary written work.
3. To write from dictation ordinary prose containing subject-matter about which he has studied.
4. To give from memory selections from poetry.
5. To write in good English well known stories, giving proper attention to paragraphing.
6. To use a reasonably adequate vocabulary.
7. To use at all times correct verb forms.
8. To be able to construct sentences illustrating the various elements of the sentence.
9. To analyze sentences that are not too complicated.
10. To use the dictionary with dexterity.
11. To stand before a class and give an oral discussion upon some topic.
12. To write compositions which have good form and arrangement.

Mr. Schlaugh (62) in his comparison of 32 state courses of study found oral language espoused by the majority; the activities suggested for use in language studies were varied; there was little argument as to which techniques should be used and when they should be introduced.

Miss Lansdowne (47) found wide variations in the courses of study of 25 public-school systems regarding the different elements of formal grammar listed for

each grade, marked inconsistencies regarding the grade-placement of certain related items, and striking similarities in others.

The examination of 58 courses of study for use in the elementary grades convinced Miss Zook (75) that while grammar occupies about one-fifth of the field, the objectives vary. There is considerable unanimity of opinions, however, for 80% of the recommendations touch upon about ten of the objectives.<sup>4</sup>

#### PUNCTUATION

Miss Boehlje (8) checked 25 punctuation situations in 969 letters written by third grade pupils and 801 letters written by fourth grade pupils. She found not only that the period was the most frequently used punctuation mark, involving 59% of all the punctuation situations for third and 63% for fourth grade, but that it had the highest percentage of correct use. Commas were used in 41% of the punctuation situations by grade three and 37% by grade four. Both groups more often omitted punctuation than used the wrong mark.

Miss Benzler (6) compared the punctuation usages of fourth and fifth grade pupils of high and low intelligence quotients in three themes written in school—one description, one narration, and one exposition. She found that fourth-high and fifth-high recognized 64 and 76 different punctuation situations; the corresponding numbers for the low groups were 50 and 63. The percentages of accuracy for the fourth-high and fifth-high were 58 and 62; those for the fourth-low and fifth-low were 38 and 50.

In compositions totaling 20,000 running words for each group Mr. Vanderstoop (71) studied the control of punctuation marks by a group of sixth grade

<sup>4</sup> Studies dealing with parts of speech have been made by Martha Van Brussel, Jacob A. O. Lien, Nell G. Holtman, C. L. Bailey. See Greene, *op. cit.*

pupils of high intelligence quotient and another of sixth grade pupils of low. Eighty-eight different punctuation situations were used by the high and 71 by the low. The pupils of low intelligence made twice as many substitutions. They omitted or used punctuation incorrectly 548 times out of 1,000 opportunities, while the high group's record was 391 times.<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Goodman (26) gave the Leonard Diagnostic Test in Punctuation and Capitalization to 1,203 pupils in grades five to eight in three city school systems. From this survey test he concluded that growth in ability to punctuate and to capitalize correctly was significant from grade to grade except between grades seven and eight.

#### ERRORS IN THE USE OF GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION

Miss Ururuel (70) found that the predominant errors (56%) in compositions written by the pupils in grades seven, eight, and nine, of Holton and Lawrence, Kansas, were faulty connections, obscure reference of pronouns, and spelling. Two per cent of the errors comprised double negatives, wrong cases of the pronoun, and lack of agreement between the pronoun and its antecedent.

Miss Spray (64) found from the examination of 1,016 compositions written by the pupils in grades three, four, five, and six of South Bend that errors in punctuation were most common, 49%; capitalization, 22%; misuses of the verb, 5%. She states that the rate of error elimination is unsatisfactory throughout the grades, but that the ratio of errors to the number of words used decreased slightly from the third to the sixth grade. Miss Pavey (55) concluded that most children in the fifth, sixth, and eighth grades have considerable difficulty in discriminating between conventional and un-

conventional case forms of personal, interrogative, and relative pronouns and the tense forms of irregular verbs.

Miss Hay (35) made an analysis of the errors of a group of eighth grade pupils in the use of the nominative and possessive cases, and of simple, complex, and compound sentences. She found that the errors made by one group of children may not be the errors of another similar group, and the prevalence of an error and its frequency within a group may vary. These conclusions, rather than being statements of universal facts, may be weaknesses of the validity and reliability of the tests used in her experiment.

#### DRILL AND PRACTICE MATERIAL

Drill for the purpose of correcting English errors was given to more than fifteen hundred pupils at Salina, Kansas, under the direction of Mr. Van Slyck (72). He found drill effective with all types of pupils, particularly the slow ones, and that the same types of errors were made by pupils of all intelligence ratings, but the slow ones make more of them.

Miss Hay (35) found that drill in the use of the nominative and possessive cases and in recognizing simple, complex, and compound sentences greatly lessened the errors of an eighth grade class, but it practically never reduced one of them to the point of eradication. She found that some errors can be foreseen on a pretest, but by no means all, for new errors may appear on a retest.

Mr. Daniels (17) reported the results obtained when a practice test on the parts of certain irregular verbs was used by 160 pupils in grades four to six divided by chance into control and practice groups. He found a greater gain for the practice group than for the control group. Mr. Pierce (76) developed a practice test for individual use in sixth grade language. Some of the evidences of the test's value were such intangibles as "pupils showed

<sup>5</sup> Studies involving the use of punctuation have been made by Jeannette Bruce, E. R. Spaulding, E. R. Butterworth, P. K. Cesander. See Greene, *op. cit.*



a growing tendency to depend upon themselves," but he does say they advanced in their ability to interpret directions.

Miss Thomas (69) described the use of a series of practice tests arranged for pupils of a fourth grade in which each child's practice material was prepared to help him overcome his own difficulties without aid from the teacher. She concludes from the satisfactory results obtained on frequent retests covering the practice items that "individual instruction in word usage should take the place of class instruction as far as possible . . . pupils taught under that technique made more progress than pupils taught by . . . class instruction . . . there is a tendency for large numbers of errors to be made by a few pupils rather than a small number of errors . . . by many pupils."<sup>6</sup>

#### VOCABULARY

Mr. Hunter (41) collected 744 letters written by boys and girls in grade five in the schools of 37 states, Cuba, and Hawaii. The letters comprised 51,990 running words—2,505 different words. When compared with the Horn adult vocabulary list, there were 382 words not found in that list, 274 of which occurred only once. Twenty-nine per cent of the first thousand words in the Horn list were not found in this list. The author concludes that the greater portion of the words used most often by adults in writing are used by these fifth grade pupils. Miss Burdine (10) compared the words used in 429 letters written by children of the first six grades in 34 states with the words in Horn's Composite List and McKee's Common Theme List. She found 54,750 running words and 3,003 different words. Mr. Pratt (58) endeavored to find the words which children use in their spontaneous writing by the analysis of 1,384 themes written by 549 fifth grade children. A total of 99,933 running

words were used with 3,874 different words. Sixty-two per cent of the 816 words that were used in these themes but not included in the Horn list were used only once. The conclusion of these three studies made at the University of Colorado is that if only adult words were taught, most of the words used frequently in these pupils' spontaneous writings would be included; if only the words used by the children were taught, many words frequently used by adults would be omitted.

Miss Beale (4) searched for the factors which influence the vocabularies of 168 children in the intermediate grades of Murray, Kentucky. She concluded that the vocabularies of the pupils in grades five and six were influenced by the radio, of those in grades six and seven by size of family; and of all grades by mentality, magazine and newspaper reading, Sunday-School attendance, telephone, sex, place of residence, type of schools, education of parents, and occupation of parents.<sup>7</sup>

#### TESTING TECHNIQUES

By combining the scores obtained on twelve weekly tests, most of them the completion type, Mr. Hunt (40) found that the most progress in language was made by the pupils of the fourth grade (84%), followed in succession by the sixth grade (78%), the third grade (75%), and finally the fifth (65%). He concluded that the material in the fifth grade was most difficult to learn, and the next most difficult, that of the fourth.

An experimental appraisal of two methods used in evaluating written compositions was used by Mr. Hulton (38) to determine whether teachers are consistent in giving high and low marks on written compositions and to determine whether or not the variability of teachers on such papers can be reduced by the use

<sup>6</sup> See also Crawford, Greene, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> See also White in Greene, *op. cit.*

of a grading guide. Five compositions taken from the Hudelson English Composition Scale (tests for grades six to ten) were scaled by thirty teachers in five cities of Wisconsin. In the second experiment five paragraph compositions written by eighth grade children which had been rated good, average, or poor by the teachers were marked again by 75 teachers using a grading guide—content, 40 points; composition, 20 points; grammatical correctness, 20; spelling, 10; and good form of manuscript, 10. He found that there is no general tendency on the part of teachers to be high or low markers, but the marks of different teachers vary greatly. The grading guide suggested by the investigator did not reduce the variability of the marks assigned to the compositions by the various teachers. Indeed, it seemed to increase the variability.<sup>8</sup>

#### READING

Two methods of presenting poems to children—having the children read the poem or reading it to them—were compared by Miss Graham (27). Three poems were read to the pupils of the third, sixth, and ninth grades of the State Teachers College, California, Pennsylvania. Each pupil wrote his opinion of the poem on a card and his comprehension was measured by a completion test. Comprehension increased by having the poems read to the class; liking was the same in either case.

Miss Lancaster (46) found that the pupils in grades four to eight in nine schools in Normal and Bloomington, Illinois, voluntarily read 54 books during the spring of 1926, 12 of which had been re-read three times and 15 of which were given the highest interest value by them. She found that the slowest and fastest readers chose the same books, but the slow readers tended not to finish the

books twice as often as the fast readers. Miss Overman (54) says from her study of 33 fifth grade pupils' interest in historical reading that they prefer detailed accounts rather than brief summaries, couched in familiar rather than unfamiliar words. Mr. Hamilton (37) found a variety of factors influencing children's reading habits, but that "pupils from homes where there is an abundance of reading material are frequently wider readers than those from homes where books are few and uninteresting."

The 78 pupils of two sixth grades whose reading difficulties were analyzed in detail by Miss Beavers (5) and who were given individual remedial help, as well as systematic study of unfamiliar words as groups, were allowed to read a variety of books silently during their reading period. They read 175 different books during a school year. This was but one factor in a program to improve reading. The majority of the group exceeded the eighth grade standard in oral and silent reading at the end of the school year. Three hundred and eight eighth grade pupils were practiced in one of two ways—extensive reading of many selections with emphasis on the whole, and intensive study with emphasis on the parts—with the result that the extensive-reading group read five times as many short poems, three times as many short stories as the intensive-study group, but with slightly poorer understanding. Miss Malteby (50) concludes that additional time spent in detailed analysis of a selection does not seem to prepare children to comprehend more effectively. Miss Stickle (66) with an experimental group of 60 and a control group of 200 eighth grade pupils found that the synthetic method of instruction in contrast to the analytic definitely increased appreciation of literature in all groups, but it was most potent within average groups. Miss Fruin (23) found little difference between the

<sup>8</sup> See also Bunch, Klein, Haworth summarized in Greene, *op. cit.*

# The Musical Approach to Poetry

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THE STATEMENT that poetry is a kind of music and music a kind of poetry has become a kind of truism; but the implications of this aesthetic truth, certainly in so far as the science of education is concerned, are still in a stage of infancy. We have not yet realized just how akin poetry and music are to each other. With this in mind, the writer, a practice teacher, conducted in a fifth grade poetry class during the summer session an experiment which, while perhaps not proving anything conclusively, indicates certainly the valuable potentialities in the teaching of poetry as a type of music.

The class, a small one, consisting of six boys and two girls, had been studying patriotic and war poems for about three weeks. During that time, the class had read as a group the more famous poems of Alfred Lord Tennyson, Siegfried Sassoon, Rupert Brooke, and Walt Whitman. The teacher had tried to stress an emotional receptivity to the sounds and images of the poems rather than a predominantly intellectual understanding of them. The children were repeatedly encouraged to read aloud and to reread those passages which appealed to them auditorily. The "high spots" of the poems studied were read to the group by the teacher, often in an intensely dramatic manner. For example, when Tennyson's "The 'Revenge'" was read, the scene was laid for the situation so that some children represented ships, others, characters, others still, certain sentiments of patriotism or fear, of hate or love. The effect was a curious and not uninteresting

blend of the discordant and the harmonious.

About two weeks before the end of the session, the teacher decided that it might be well for purposes of integration and retention to combine the most stirring passages of the poems and form a poetic playlet. The plans were laid quickly, for the children were all too willing to name their favorite lines. One preferred, "I have a rendezvous with Death." Others liked, "Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!" The favorite was, as might be expected, Tennyson's famous

"Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward."

The result of two days of exploration and organization was a playlet of about one hundred lines comprising a large number of classic passages of English and American war poetry. The play was an impressionistic interpretation of a battle-scene, the whole set to an incessant chant which increased or decreased in tone with the intensity of the battle. The chant was used at first to convey the idea of ceaseless intensity; but when the teacher saw the natural enthusiasm with which the children responded to the chant, he decided to direct the entire play through the use of musical methodology.

The teacher was rapidly transformed into a director; the children, into musical instruments. The two girls were the treble instruments—the flutes, the piccolos, the fifes. One boy became a husky trombone; another, a fearless bugle; still another, an elegiac violin. Throughout rehearsal, the children were regarded as certain types of

instruments. The teacher's pencil was the focus of every eye. It was a baton, beating the rhythm, demanding a shrill note here, a faster one there, a basso somewhere else. And the voices of the children followed the baton relentlessly.

The dominant note of the play, the motif—to adhere to our musical terminology—was

"I have a rendezvous with Death  
At some disputed barricade."

This motif was invested with a sinister and startling note. Other than that, the motif changed in rhythm and intensity with every voice. Now it was a piccolo, quick and shrill and stricken with fear; now it was a violin, mournfully bewailing a departed friend. The lines of the play varied in length, so that a freedom in verse form was achieved which served to accentuate the nuances of the scene. There was no monotonous "rocking horse" rhythm. The rhythm was made to change with the scene and instrument (or voice). Tennyson's pæans of indomitable patriotism formed an effective contrast with Siegfried Sassoon's melodies of despair; and even as the content changed, so the tempo and the very atmosphere changed with it.

The play begins with the beat of a drum, careless and unafraid: "I have a rendezvous with Death." This is followed by a note of fright which beats a trifle faster: "I have a rendezvous . . ." Then the thrill and the glory of war: "I have a rendezvous . . ." Then the horror of it: "I have a rendez . . ." Then a mighty discord, swelling and sinking as wave after wave of emotion floods the men. Suddenly, the signal for the charge. This is war. The indignant cornet: "Beat, beat, drums!—blow, bugles, blow!" The frightened fife: "Blow, bugles, blow!" Then the heroic basso tones: "The charge of the gallant three hundred, the Heavy Brigade." Again, "Theirs but to do and die." And yet again:

"And a day less or more  
At sea or ashore,  
We die—does it matter when?"

A loud noise as of many whistles blowing. Shouts of "The Armistice, the Armistice." Soft and plaintive as an elegy comes the mourning violin:

"Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;  
And beauty came like the setting sun;  
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror  
Drifted away. . . ."

And more softly:

"My heart was shaken with tears; and horror  
Drifted away. . . ."

Gradually disappearing, like the gentle fading of a blood-drenched sunset:

"And horror . . . drifted . . . away. . . ."

This project must seem theoretically above the mental level of a child of the fifth grade. The writer must admit that he was himself of this opinion during the first two days of the work. The project was one which necessitated a certain knowledge of the chorale on the part of the teacher and the pupil. It necessitated a teacher possessing a highly attuned appreciation of the beautiful and the effective in poetry and music. And from the pupil's standpoint, the project required children who would allow themselves to respond sincerely and unaffectedly to the stimulus of rhythm. The results of the first day were disappointing. The children could not understand the "idea" of the project, and the result was a deafening and chaotic Babel. And then the children began to interest themselves actively in the work. To them, the playlet was primarily play. It was a game, and they loved it. The interest, which had been only apathetic during the three-week study of poetry, became supercharged during the course of the project. The children in the class achieved a "notoriety" from coming to school early to practice their parts. When one considers that "coming to school early" meant coming at 8:15 and that the



"parts" were selections from Walt Whitman and Tennyson, one begins to realize, although inadequately, the extent of the children's interest in the project.

But, it might be objected, this is not true interest. This is no "identification of the self with the activity." This is merely entertainment. Let us consider the facts, however. It is true that at first the children loved the play; but they ended by loving the poems and poets that constituted the play. Each child carried away with him a certain residuum of the entertainment. This residuum, the writer chooses to believe, was the result of each child's interest. One girl in the class became deeply interested in Whitman's poetry; the ruffian of the school, one of the best pupils, memorized "The Charge of the Heavy Brigade" from a sheer love of Tennyson; his "pal," who had built a reputation for himself as a "scatterbrain," memorized "The Charge of the Light Brigade" and "The 'Revenge.'" The children loved *their* poems, the last child particularly. Upon the slightest pretext, he would spring to his feet and recite his "Half a league." Strangely, he managed to put a dash and spirit into the poem which his former teachers had never known him to possess. He became a "figure" in the class. He helped the other boys learn their poems; he was first with any suggestions; he was most valuable as an assistant to the

teacher. The writer does not wish to imply that the boy became a changed personality overnight because of his love for poetry; but it is remarkably significant that the boy's other grades rose *only* after his teachers had seen his work in the poetry class.

This paper has not attempted to be arbitrarily conclusive in its statements. It does not say that poetry ought necessarily to be taught musically. It does not say that a teacher of poetry ought necessarily to be well grounded in music appreciation. It does not say that a child will necessarily remember the beauty of poetry if he can learn that poetry is also a very pleasant pastime—something quite as entertaining and intensely interesting, in its own Parnassian way, as a baseball or football game. It does not say these things. But if it does not, it is not because it should not. There are reasons aplenty why the writer might make these statements and make them arbitrarily. He might easily find adequate basis for such a group of conclusions in the writings of two such divergent and preëminent aesthetes as Benedetto Croce and Jacques Maritain—and what is more important, he would probably be right. But the writer chooses instead to base these statements (which he feels arbitrarily, if he does not couch them thus) on the glowing faces of the children during rehearsal.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY OF UNPUBLISHED STUDIES

(Continued from page 62)

reading habits of children of superior, average, and poor ability.

The summary of these theses might be extended still further to include studies evaluating provisions for individual dif-

ferences in ability; descriptions of courses of study compiled from comparisons of many existing courses and the opinions of experts in English and education; and two historical studies.

# One View of Elementary English

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IS THERE agreement, even yet, on the fundamentals of elementary English? In many schools and many school systems there is still much uncertainty as to objectives, and much wasted effort, especially in grades three to six.

English as usually understood in schools has two important phases. The first is the class in which the pupil is supposed to be gaining facility in the use of the language, both speaking and writing, including correct forms of speech effectively employed, and the necessary technicalities in writing. The second is the equally important phase of appreciation and enjoyment of literature, which has many sides in itself that are alluring in possibilities. But it is more likely to be in the first type of work that some of us feel that our efforts are diffused, and the results unsatisfactory, while at the same time we are sure that it is possible to set up and to reach better standards.

There is no lack of published material for elementary English. It varies from the books and sets of books not far removed from the old "language" series, and little more valuable, to the concise and trenchant outlines of Mahoney, Sheridan, and others, who are a tower of strength and inspiration to teachers trying to do real work. The contrast between these types of material shows how far we are from knowing what we want to do. The older forms, and they are not all in old books, are very largely reproduction work, like retelling a story or using a picture as alleged inspiration for narrative. Wherever expression is expected the effort seems to be to give the child something to talk about—a purely extraneous sub-

ject, and one which loses any fire it might have when forty children have mulled over the same thing. There are similar disadvantages in some of the more modern activities if they are poorly managed, especially if there has been an attempt at a special activity purely for the English class. There are real ones of course, a properly managed school newspaper for example, but ordinarily the English should come naturally enough from school and outside life without need of bolstering by looking for something to talk or write about.

Often work planned to enrich experience in English grows to include such a multitude of interests, or facts in such an involved relationship that any reasonable thoroughness in using them results in a few long labored efforts rather than frequent and constant practice on the type of thing included in natural conversation or personal needs for written expression. The opportunity for vicarious experience and an enriched background is in the literature field and in the work in other subjects. What is better than such work as present day geography or history to teach concise marshalling of facts, following outlines, sticking to the point, proving a point from collected facts, evaluating material? Oral discussion of these subjects may be splendid practice in exposition and argument, if well handled.

But for small children the best and easiest practice is narration, and we return to personal experiences and related types of subjects, where the content is so simple and familiar that the child can concentrate on how it is said. Children do not need trumped-up material to talk

about. Merely skimming the surface of personal experience would require terms, and then, instead of exhausting all themes, so many new viewpoints would have developed that there would be many avenues still unexplored. With this simple individual material the child can think whether he has complete sentences, has an effective beginning and ending, and the other requirements for his short effort. It is this using of familiar material, and keeping all written and oral work short that makes it possible to work for effective expression. I like to place a strong emphasis on this type of work in grade four, because in this, as in other important ways, it is a transition grade. Through the third grade the work is largely informal and simple encouragement of spontaneous expression, though there should be sentence sense, as well as other values by this time. The fifth and sixth grade teachers would seem to have a right to expect the children to be able to give an oral talk of four or five sentences, on one subject only, and reasonably well put together; also to be able to write a similar group of sentences in a paragraph correctly set down and punctuated.

That is not so simple as it sounds, but it can be done with enough practice. One reason it is not better accomplished is because it is assumed to be so obvious. Teachers themselves, their supervisors, and others in charge of such work too often feel that these simple things should be taken for granted, and that there should be more evidence of accomplishment—something to show. The best thing to show at this stage is a class where every member can come forward without hesitation or embarrassment, choose his own subject—though there may be a list of suggestive titles to help the children who lack this spontaneous choice; use four or five clearly defined sentences—in grade four they should be short and usually

simple; tell of one thing only; use interesting beginning and ending sentences; and speak clearly with poise and directness. I repeat that this does not occur accidentally. It is the result of long practice, much listening to others, friendly criticism and comparison—and more practice. As one elementary principal put it, the need is for the children to talk and write, and talk and write, and talk and write. In handling this practice one of the questions may be, which is more difficult to do and which more valuable when accomplished, to encourage the diffident class or pupil, or to restrain the too garrulous one, but both need help and the right treatment.

In succeeding grades longer and more complex sentences may be used after the sentence sense is firmly established; longer compositions given, because the children will have more to say; and they will grow into a more critical appreciation of clarity, humor, or forceful expression. The growth of the pupils' pleasure in this form of composition is perhaps the best proof of its value. It comes to be great fun, and they become eager to hear as well as to talk. After a time they will enjoy and appreciate different treatments of a theme, the emotions aroused by the incident or the beauty of sustained tone in a description or a word picture, though these more personal expressions may be more likely to appear in written work.

The written work which will follow and complement the oral requires the same sort of continual practice because some sense of form and mastery of technicalities is necessary. Copying, dictation, and original work are all valuable, but can be varied and enlivened, even though correctness must be made as essential as in the multiplication table. One of the first things to aid this mastery of technicalities in any school system is to settle which of the few simple and necessary ones are to be taught in each grade, and

# A Course of Study in Creative Writing for the Grades

## Organization Strands and Form Units with Suggested Activities

C. C. CERTAIN

Detroit, Michigan

(Concluded from January)

### III. WRITING FOR TECHNIQUE AND GOOD TASTE

#### A. VERSE WRITING

1. *Activity:* To skip in circle, to music, with hands joined, to the right, to the left, then walk twice to center and out, then salute the center.<sup>25</sup>

*Objective:* To form the idea of pattern, and rhythms.

\*2. *Activity:* To compose a group poem to be used as a song at an Arbor Day ceremony in which the whole school will participate.

*Objectives:* To build up a concrete vocabulary; to gain practice in rhyme, rhythm and verse forms learned; to use the dictionary to find synonyms and rhyming words.

3. *Activity:* To write short seasonal poems to be presented in a festival of children's own poetry.

*Objectives:* To observe appreciatively the poetic aspects of the season; to note how other poets have expressed their thoughts about the seasons (with especial attention to the fact that the poems need not be long—e.g. Kilmer's "Easter"); to phrase observations accurately and pleasingly (while teacher writes phrases on the board); to avoid the hackneyed in phrase and thought; to employ rhyme schemes less primitive than the couplet; to criticize and re-write poems after the first draft, until they are rhythmically perfect.

<sup>25</sup> Corinne Brown. *Op. cit.*

4. *Activity:* To listen carefully to information given by the teacher on rhythms, verse forms, and metrics of poems, and to use this information in writing poems.<sup>26</sup>

*Objectives:* To learn some of the technical terms; to acquire a technique in rhythmical writing. (Note: use Coleridge's stanza on metrics.)

5. *Activity:* To learn the French forms of verse—the triolet, rondeau, ballade.

*Objective:* To make note of these forms; to copy examples of each form in a note-book.

6. *Activity:* To say as accurately and gracefully as possible, in two lines, a thought about something. The lines should not rhyme. Then, using these lines, write a triolet.<sup>27</sup>

*Objective:* To discuss the triolet in detail in the class; to hear a number of triolets read aloud; to exercise discrimination in subject matter.

7. *Activity:* To become acquainted with the technique of the ballad.

*Objective:* To understand the narrative character of the ballad, and the typical subject matter; to understand ballad structure, including the use of rhyme, meter and the trochaic foot; to read and hear read aloud several ballads.

8. *Activity:* To write a ballad on some stirring event (a local football victory, a spectacu-

<sup>26</sup> Nellie B. Sargent in Hartman and Shumaker. *Op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> H. Augustus Miller, Jr. *Creative Writing of Verse*. American Book Co.



lar baseball game) that the individual may select.

*Objectives:* To study carefully several ballads; to play the "sedulous ape" to one ballad.

9. *Activities:* To make notes on the teacher's explanation of blank verse; to hear several passages of blank verse read aloud; to divide into lines, passages of blank verse which have been rewritten in the form of prose; to divide blank verse lines into feet, and scan them.<sup>28</sup>

*Objective:* To become acquainted with the characteristics of blank verse.

10. *Activity:* To make a paraphrase, in blank verse, of a poetical prose passage.

*Objective:* To read and hear read aloud, much blank verse; to compare parallel metrical and prose translations of an incident in the Iliad or the Odyssey.<sup>28</sup>

#### B. PROSE

\*1. *Activity:* To report sounds observed on the way to and from school.

*Objective:* To develop power of aural observation; to build vocabulary; to develop the habit of speaking in sentences.

\*2. *Activity:* To write vividly and in accurate detail the answer to some such question as "How does the sun look as it shines through trees on an autumn afternoon?" "What do you see as the sun shines through a prism?"

*Objectives:* To develop accurate powers of observation, and skill in recording observations.

3. *Activity:* To make an idea or experience more clearly understood by written comparison in short sentence form.<sup>29</sup>

*Objectives:* To learn the meaning of simile and of metaphor; to be original and interesting in making comparisons that aid communication.

\*4. *Activity:* To make a list, in the form of a booklet, of library books the children have read. Each entry should contain author's name, title of book, illustrator, and one or two sentences telling the nature of the book and evaluating it. (This activity may be used in connection with Good Book Week.)

<sup>28</sup> George Mackaness. *Op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> John Hooper. *Op. cit.*

*Objectives:* To promote technical mastery of the sentence; to develop critical sense; to train children to notice the authors of the books they read; to encourage a love of reading; to help lay foundations for bibliographical work.

\*5. *Activity:* To write an essay or story under the stimulus of a class room talkie or movie, or the radio.

*Objectives:* To prepare tentative sketches, plans, or first draft papers for constructive suggestions, criticism and re-working.

6. *Activity:* To write a story to read to the class in which several children who have seen an automobile accident contradict one another in telling how the accident happened.

*Objectives:* To learn accuracy in observation of details; to learn to write dialogue; to learn to write part of a story in indirect narrative, and part in direct.

\*7. *Activity:* To write a letter to a friend telling of some personal achievement such as winning a dictionary, solving a jig-saw puzzle, learning to roller-skate or ride a bicycle.

*Objectives:* To develop an easy style in personal prose; to write personally, but not egotistically; to see all elements in a situation that make it interesting to others; to be sincere.

8. *Activity:* To list all the details that appeal to the senses in a descriptive prose paragraph, written on the blackboard.

*Objectives:* To give skill in the psychological analysis of descriptive prose, concentrating on sense impressions in relation to the growth of literary expression.

9. *Activity:* To write brief descriptive essays on such subjects as: a country road, a deserted house, five o'clock traffic, the morning after a sleet storm, the perfect place for a picnic.

*Objectives:* To write short, informal, descriptive essays, showing good organization and "the use of the imagination together with some development of the powers of observation."<sup>30</sup>

10. *Activity:* To describe a puppy pulling at his leash, or a kitten playing with the tip of its tail, or a bird taking a dust bath, with

<sup>30</sup> Mackaness. *Op. cit.*

sufficient vividness to make others see the thing described.<sup>31</sup>

*Objectives:* To focus attention on perception; to learn to convey clear, fresh impressions; to heighten one's awareness of the world about him; to employ descriptive verbs.

11. *Activity:* To contribute stories, poems, or essays to the school magazine, or to a special classroom magazine issued occasionally when creative expression is at high tide.

*Objectives:* To revise papers for publication; to learn to read copy and proof.

12. *Activity:* To write personal essays on such subjects as: stung by a bee, toothache, building a shack, our vacation ball team, dish-washing versus dusting as Saturday work.<sup>32</sup>

*Objectives:* To record experiences clearly and definitely; to develop literary style in personal prose; to utilize the humorous aspects of situations described.

### C. DRAMATIZATION AND PLAY WRITING

1. *Activity:* To dramatize "Little Black Sambo" to give as a play for a first grade group of children, using the chairs and other furniture for scenery.

*Objectives:* To give practice in changing indirect to direct narrative; to give skill in planning and organizing such undertakings; to give outlet to imaginative play in the handling of scenery; to give training in the selection of leaders in creative group activities; to sense character in spoken and written dialogue.

2. *Activity:* To dramatize a selected Mother Goose rhyme (The Queen of Hearts, Jack and Jill, When I Was a Bachelor) for the pleasure of play activity.<sup>33</sup>

*Objectives:* To learn to write dialogue in the third grade; to write less fragmentary dialogue; to select dramatic incidents; to allow children opportunity for originality in treatment of a story.

3. *Activity:* To dramatize "Jack be nimble" for a group of visitors from a first grade.<sup>34</sup>

*Objectives:* To gain practice, in the third grade, in plot development, character visualization, and the writing of dialogue.

4. *Activity:* To criticize and offer constructive suggestions for the improvement of pantomime in the "singing with pantomime" of a Mother Goose rhyme.

*Objective:* To learn how to revise and re-write dramatic parts.

5. *Activity:* To dramatize "The Light Princess," or "Sleeping Beauty" for a marionette show, or to dramatize some other literary story at a more mature level of interest.

*Objectives:* To develop action in keeping with character; to keep dialogue in character; to provide in suitable detail for properties and settings; to select incidents in the story that will have strongest dramatic appeal.

6. *Activity:* To re-write the first draft of the dramatization of a literary story.

*Objective:* To criticize the first reading of the dramatization for range of emotions, for appropriateness of dialogue to character, and for effectiveness of plot, and after group consensus has been arrived at, to strike out the unsuitable and weak, and re-write the mediocre lines, or substitute new matter.

7. *Activity:* To write a fanciful original play introducing human beings, animals, and fairies.

*Objectives:* To keep characters distinct and in character; to acquire facility in writing dialogue; to represent real and fanciful with successful illusion.

8. *Activity:* To write an original play on pirates or other related adventure materials.

*Objectives:* To secure sharpened effect by building for climax in order of incidents; to relate incidents in form of plot.

9. *Activity:* To dramatize "Snow White" to present to a school assembly.<sup>35</sup>

*Objectives:* To show conflict of personalities through the dramatic enrichment of scenes; to center action around character; to emphasize personal traits and moods; to learn the technique of stage business.

\*10. *Activity:* To present dramatically be-

<sup>31</sup> Frances D. Dugan in Hartman and Shumaker. *Op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> George Mackaness. *Op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Corinne Brown. *Op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Dramatizing Mother Goose rhymes. *Creative Effort*. Francis W. Parker School Studies in Education, Vol. VIII.

<sup>35</sup> Merrill and Fleming. *Op. cit.*

fore another sixth grade group, some incident from the life of a great historical figure, as stimulation to the guests to give a play in return.

*Objectives:* To select fitting material for dramatic expression (humorous, exciting, or ethical situations); to choose details that will color the incident; to write dialogue in keeping with character; to acquire familiarity with biographies of great men.

\*11. *Activity:* To write a play based on the story of some talkie or picture play that the pupils have seen.

*Objectives:* To develop judgment in choosing a suitable talkie for presentation; to develop initiative powers; to develop further ability in writing dialogue; to gain awareness of the limitations of the stage.

12. *Activity:* To write a play utilizing facts learned in social science class concerning some industry (cotton, paper-making, citrus-fruit) or concerning the life of people of some foreign country (Italy, Holland, Switzerland), the play to be presented before the parent-teachers meeting.

*Objectives:* To select significant and dramatic aspects of the material; to arrange these aspects in dramatic sequence; to create characters to portray these aspects; to write dialogue suitable to the purpose and the character; to correlate creative writing with other studies.

13. *Activity:* To dramatize in a sixth grade class Andersen's story of "The Ugly Duckling" as an assembly program.<sup>36</sup>

*Objectives:* To dramatize a story that has the essential qualities of good literature—compression, a problem at the center of the plot, a concentration of incidents on a set purpose, and dominance of a single character.

14. *Activity:* To dramatize the comic story of "Hans in Luck" for an invited audience of pupils from other classes.<sup>36</sup>

*Objectives:* To write an outright comedy; to show the humor in the incongruous and irrelevant; to create moods of levity and jollity.

15. *Activity:* To dramatize "Cinderella" for an assembly program.

<sup>36</sup> Merrill and Fleming. *Op. cit.*

*Objectives:* To prepare a plan of action, or plot outline; to visualize and differentiate clearly each character in the story; to decide upon a definite narrative point of view; to write the play under a scheme of committee organization; to be sincere and make the characters seem real; to criticize the first drafts for weaknesses and crudities; to re-write all parts needing it; to make all necessary revisions.

16. *Activity:* To write individual plays from a common plot assigned to an upper grade class.

*Objectives:* To emphasize possibilities of originality in the handling of details, in point of view and in character.

#### TECHNIQUES AND TASTES WHICH SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED THROUGH WRITING SPECIFICALLY FOR TECHNIQUE

##### A. Verse Writing

- To gain an idea of patterns and rhythms
- To develop vocabulary
- To become familiar with verse forms
- To correlate creative writing with other subjects
- To use dictionary for synonyms and rhymes
- To secure accurate and pleasing phrasing
- To avoid the hackneyed in phrase and thought
- To criticize and re-write first efforts
- To become acquainted with technical terms of prosody
- To learn characteristics of triolet, rondeau, ballade
- To learn characteristics of ballad
- To learn characteristics of blank verse

##### B. Prose

- To build concrete vocabulary
- To develop interest in daily environment
- To develop aural observation
- To speak in sentences
- To describe accurately
- To use similes and metaphors to aid communication
- To develop critical consciousness
- To encourage reading
- To form some idea of bibliographical work

To criticize and revise one's own work  
 To learn to handle dialogue  
 To learn to write in indirect, as well as direct, narrative  
 To develop an easy style in personal prose  
 To select interesting elements in a situation  
 To be able to analyze descriptive prose for its effectiveness  
 To write brief, informal essays  
 To select fitting words in communication  
 To read copy and proof  
 To utilize humor in personal prose

To select dramatic incidents  
 To handle plot development  
 To revise and re-write first efforts  
 To develop character through dialogue and action  
 To provide practically for settings and properties in play construction  
 To individualize characters, emphasizing personal moods and traits  
 To present illusions successfully  
 To build for climax  
 To learn technique of stage business  
 To develop critical judgment  
 To correlate creative play-writing with other subjects  
 To recognize and write comedy  
 To prepare and use preliminary plans and outlines  
 To gain originality in creative writing of drama

### C. Dramatization and Play Writing

To be able to change indirect into direct narrative  
 To plan and organize creative dramatic undertakings as a group  
 To write dialogue

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## WHAT? NO STAGE FOR POETRY?

(Continued from page 43)

American theatre-goer, and to present one example of the stage-proof type. It goes without saying that not *all* types of poetry can be successfully staged, a dramatic fact obviously applicable to all types of play literature even unto the prose play written primarily for the stage. It is equally as obvious that the average theatre-goer must be initiated into poetic drama by degrees—not exposed in the beginning to the choral tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides. Appreciation for what is best in literature seldom begins with the best.

But it is not to be understood that it was only the ludicrous phases of *Dark Beauty* that the audience appreciated, that it was the laughs that put the program over. The Negroes themselves would scarcely have gone into ecstasies over ap-

parent ridicule. Tears were shed over the sublime elements. Thus the presentation of this preview, by no means a lowbrow form of entertainment were it ever so confusedly sublime and ridiculous—else it did not merit the praise it received from the Hollywood Bowl directors—was indication enough that the public mind is developed far beyond the nursery-rhyme stage in poetic appreciation, and perhaps that the staging of poetry need not necessarily be confined within the walls of schools and colleges, as it apparently is at the present time. Yet it is up to the schools to contribute their share in the evolution of a new or revived poetic drama in America—and the University of Southern California is certainly the axis upon which an American stage for poetry may rapidly evolve.



# Editorial

## From the World's Sandlots

IF I WERE asked to name the most child life in the modern world, I lasting and significant influence upon should, I think, list two: the Junior Red Cross during and immediately after the World War, and books like *Katrinka*, *Ola*, and *Hans Brinker*, published during the past three decades to help young people in many lands become better known to one another.

The first of these, the Junior Red Cross, touched the sympathies and understanding of children everywhere, bringing all nationalities together in the universal appeal of human kind in trouble and distress. Language barriers were broken through, political frontiers passed over, and national boundaries eradicated. Children were children the world over. They not only sympathized with one another in trouble, but the more fortunate everywhere regarded one another with insatiable curiosity and neighborly interest. Keepsakes and playthings were exchanged as tokens of mutual respect and friendship. Those things nearest the heart in one's homeland were sent into far-away countries that the children there might know how much alike are all human kind when it comes to the treasured small things of life. There were no foreigners in those great years, for children saw one another clearly when the veils that had so long obscured one nationality from another were once lifted.

It was too much to expect that the freshness and the wholesomeness of those first international exchanges of children would continue unclouded and unchecked. Yet some forces have survived great enough to nurture the friendship

and understanding begun in those years. Chief among these have been publishers of children's books.

There is an element of greatness in those publishers who have had the vision to see the need for children's books in translation, and have brought out such splendid English versions as those by Siri Andrews, and the remarkable *Sidsel Longskirt* mentioned in this issue (p. 75). They have seen also the need for children's books in the vernacular on foreign lands. To this end, they have sent their authors, editors, and artists abroad to deepen their knowledge and broaden their outlook in the spirit of internationalism.

One cannot read the article in this issue of *THE REVIEW* by Miss Gunterman of Longmans, Green and Company without being impressed with the effects of such a policy. Miss Gunterman makes her readers understand how utterly foreign the spirit of war is to the nature of young people. The Italian rookies, all "so pitifully young," had no heart for fighting. "They would try to sing," she says, but "the song would gain a little in volume as a voice here or there joined in; then suddenly they would die away again. These boys just did not want to be in the army, to add to the great toll taken by war."

It is in childhood that the work to end war must be begun. And nearest at hand to this purpose are books written in the spirit of human understanding and sympathy. At the editorial desks in all the publishing houses we want persons like Miss Gunterman, sufficiently traveled and sufficiently gifted with wisdom to see through the pomp and show of marching armies back into the boyhood of the men

(Continued on page 76)

# Among the Publishers

JANE FOSTER

## Picture Books and Books for Little Children

*Babar the King.* By Jean de Brunhoff. Trans. from the French by Merle Haas. Smith and Haas, 1935. \$3.00.

A successor to "The Story of Babar" and "The Travels of Babar," both of which were widely popular. For children up to 8.

*Downstreet with Edith.* By Hildreth T. Wriston. Illus. by Grace Paull. Doubleday, Doran, 1935. \$1.50.

Through the eyes of the author and illustrator the "late Victorian" period, with which this little book is concerned, takes on a charm not suspected by contemporaries. Children will like the story. Up to 8.

*Little Duck.* By Marjorie Barrows. Illus. by Marie Honoré Myers. Grosset and Dunlap, 1935.

The text is in script. A simple and amusing story, attractively presented. For very little children.

*A Little Lamb.* By Helen and Alf Evers. Illus. by the authors. Farrar and Rinehart, 1935. 75¢.

After the teacher turned him out, Mary's lamb felt the need for companionship and frolic. But the lamb's relatives were all solemn sheep—in fact all the animals and humans the lamb met were far from frisky. His search for a playfellow leads him through some engaging pictures, a little mischief, and back to his family. A winning lovable little book. Up to 7.

*Mitty and Mr. Syrup.* By Ruth Langland Holberg. Illus. by Richard A. Holberg. Doubleday, Doran, 1935. \$1.00.

The adventures of Mitty and Sarah Ann, her doll, Saturday, February 2, 1890, in Greenfield, Wisconsin. Charming in story and pictures. Up to 8.

*Wait for William.* By Marjorie Flack. Illus. by the author. Houghton Mifflin, 1935. \$1.00.

Reviewed by Miss Trommer in the November, 1935, issue of *THE REVIEW*. The story, Miss Trommer says, "should be read to every youngster within reach at once." Children from 4 to 7.

*Skookum and Sandy.* By Richard Bennett. Illus. by the author. Doubleday, Doran, 1935. \$1.00.

Skookum is a goat who was given Sandy by an old Indian. The Indian, Sandy, and Skookum all live in a village in the northwestern tip of the state of Washington. The vigorous, shadowless drawings, and the blue and green endpapers give the atmosphere of that misty, green-mantled country. Up to 10.

## Fairy and Folk Tales

*Four Tales from Hans Andersen.* A new version of the first four by R. P. Keigwin. Illus. with wood-

cuts by Gwen Raverat. Cambridge at the University Press, 1935. \$1.25.

Typographically beautiful, with a brief introduction on Andersen's diction that is interesting and valuable.

*The Little Mermaid.* By Hans Christian Andersen. Trans. by M. R. James. Illus. by Pamela Bianco. Holiday House, 1935. \$1.25.

Another example of superb typographical design. *The Courtship, Merry Marriage, and Feast of Cock Robin and Jenny Wren*, to which is added *The Doleful Death of Cock Robin*. Illus. by Anne Heyneman. Design by Helen Gentry. Holiday House, 1935. 50¢.

*Jack and the Beanstalk.* Decorations by Arvilla Parker. Design by Helen Gentry. Holiday House, 1935. 50¢.

This and "Cock Robin" measure 3½" x 5". The child who owns and loves these little volumes has set his feet toward the appreciation of beautiful printing.

*Jaufry the Knight and the Fair Brunissende.* Newly revised from the original Provençal by Vernon Ives. Decorations by John Atherton. Holiday House, 1935. \$2.00.

This story was first told at the court of Don Pedro of Aragon by a knight who claimed kinship with the British Arthur and Gawain. A twelfth century troubadour from Provence put the narrative in verse, and it was preserved in this form until the middle of the nineteenth century, when it was discovered and translated into modern French. The present English prose translation conveys the color and chivalry of the old romances in a manner particularly suitable for young readers.

*The Crystal Locket.* By Nellie M. Rowe. Illus. by Elizabeth Enright. Albert Whitman, 1935. \$1.50.

Nine folk-tales. The author is librarian of the Greensboro, N.C., Public Library. For the fairy-tale age.

*The Golden Chick and the Magic Frying Pan.* By Jeanne Chardon. Trans. from the French by Ruth Peckham Tubby. Illus. by Emma L. Brock. Albert Whitman, 1935. \$1.50.

Nine French folk-tales. The translator is Children's Librarian of the Public Library at Montclair, N.J. Miss Brock is also a children's librarian.

## Animals

*Blinky.* A Biography of a Ringtail. By Agnes Akin Atkinson. Illus. from photographs by Spencer R. Atkinson. Viking Press, 1935. \$1.50.

Vernon Bailey, retired Chief Field Naturalist, Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, calls the book "an excellent type of animal fiction" in his introduction. From 6 to 10.

*Piper's Pony. The Story of Patchwork.* By Paul Brown. Illus. by the author. Scribner's, 1935. \$2.00.

Companion volume to "Crazy Quilt." A splendid animal story.

*Topgallant, a Herring Gull.* By Marjorie Medary. Illus. by Lynd Ward. Smith and Haas, 1935. \$1.75.

The story is from the gull's view-point. A report on this would be a good upper-grade assignment in nature study.

*Out-of-Door Book.* Illus. by Mark Robinson. The Riverside Bookshelf. Houghton Mifflin, 1935. \$2.00.

A collection of stories, mainly about animals. Attractively illustrated.

*Elephants.* By W. W. Robinson. Illus. by Irene B. Robinson. Harper, 1935. \$1.75.

Chapters on the origin of the elephant, "Elephants at Work," "War Elephants," "Sacred Elephants," "Circus Elephants" Good collateral reading for nature study in the upper grades.

*The Life of Hugo the Horse.* By Anna Marie Wright. Illus. by Claude W. Woodruff. Grosset and Dunlap, 1935. 50¢.

A simple, but fresh and understanding account of a colt's experiences with other farm animals. Beautiful, vigorous pictures. Up to 10.

#### True Stories

*Alone Across the Top of the World.* The authorized story of the Arctic Journey of David Irwin. By Jack O'Brien. Foreword by Russell Owen. John C. Winston, 1936. \$2.00.

A 3600-mile trek from Nome, Alaska, to Churchill on Hudson Bay. From 12 on.

*Injuns Comin!* By M. Winston Pearson and Franklin H. Bullis. Illus. by Peter Hurd. Scribner's, 1935. \$2.00.

A true story of Minnesota 80 years ago.

*Enos Mills of the Rockies.* By Hildegard Hawthorne and Esther Burnell Mills. Houghton Mifflin, 1935. \$2.50.

#### Interesting Settings

*Young Americans from Many Lands.* By Anne Merriam Peck and Enid Johnson. Illus. by Anne Merriam Peck. Whitman, 1935. \$2.00.

Short stories of children of various nationalities that make up America—Portuguese, Czechs, Chinese, Jews, Swedish, French. Sympathetic, sensitive, informative, and vastly broadening.

*Marty Comes to Town.* Ethel Calvert Phillips. Illus.

by Georges Schreiber. Houghton Mifflin, \$1.75.

Marty's first visit to New York City. Up to 8.

*Honey Jane.* By May Justis. Illus. by Charles Smith. Doubleday, Doran, 1935. \$2.00.

The story takes place in the southern mountains. A reader eagerly shares the anxieties of Honey Jane's clergyman father over the feud and the "brought-on" teacher, and Honey Jane's stout-hearted efforts to set things right. Miss Justis knows her characters and her mountains. Boys and girls under 12.

*Uncharted Ways.* By Caroline Dale Snedeker. Illus. by Manning De V. Lee. Doubleday, Doran, 1935. \$2.00.

Mrs. Snedeker is one of the great among present-day children's authors. This story of the Quaker Margaret Stevenson, in the early days of New England, has beauty and depth. It is the kind of book that will be re-read. Girls of 12 and over.

*Jamaica Johnny.* By Berta and Elmer Hader. Illus. by the authors. Macmillan, 1935. \$2.00.

Johnny's efforts to avoid school, his later voluntary attendance, and his quick action on several occasions make interesting reading. The gray-greens, sultry purples, faint blues and pale yellows of the illustrations give a feeling of the lush tropical island. Up to 10.

*The Wolf Song.* By Ralph Hubbard. Illus. by Langdon Kihn. Doubleday, Doran, 1935. \$2.00.

The author, son of Elbert Hubbard, has lived among the Indians of whom he writes. A direct, vigorous, yet flexible style and a touching story. 12 and up.

*Tara, Daughter of the Gypsies.* By Chesley Kahmann. Illus. by F. Luis Mora. Smith and Haas, 1935. \$2.00.

Here are neither the comic opera gypsies nor the sentimentalized shadows that used to be found in bad poetry, but, with necessary reservations, the real gypsies of the roads—dirty, tricky, clannish. Yet the author manages to make a "Gorgio" reader share their fears and triumphs. For girls of 12 and over.

*Sidsel Longskirt and Solve Suntrap,* two children of Norway. By Hans Aanrud. Trans. by Dorothy Mortenson and Margery W. Bianco. Illus. by Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire. Winston, 1935. \$2.00.

These two gentle stories by a loved Norwegian author take the imaginative reader up to the saeters, and down to the valley farms. A book to be cherished in a personal library, and welcomed and read in school and public libraries. The d'Aulaires were the very ones to illustrate, and Mr. Mortenson and Mrs. Bianco the fortunate choices to translate these stories. Librarians will do well to star this for purchase.

*The Good Master.* By Kate Seredy. Illus. by the author. Viking, 1935. \$2.00.

As the story of a tom-boyish little girl on a visit to her uncle and cousin on a great farm in Hungary,

the author tells much of the life and customs of that country. But the book transcends mere accurate information, pleasantly presented; the character of "the good master" is something for a young reader to ponder. Girls 8-12.

*Red Sky.* By Theodore Acland Harper. Illus. Viking, 1935. \$2.00.

Siberia in the last days of "Holy Russia" and the first years of the Revolution. A thrilling and pity-arousing story. Older boys and girls.

*The Lotus Mark.* A Story of Siam. By Phyllis Ayer Sowers. Illus. by Margaret Ayer. Macmillan, 1935. \$1.75.

The author is thoroughly familiar with the country. 8-10.

*He Went with Marco Polo.* A story of Venice and Cathay. By Louise Andrews Kent. Illus. by C. LeRoy Baldridge and Paul Quinn. Houghton Mifflin, 1935. \$2.00.

The court of the great Kubla Khan. A well-told story for older boys and girls.

*The Chinese Twins.* By Lucy Fitch Perkins. Illus. by the author. Houghton Mifflin, 1935.

An excellent addition to Mrs. Perkins' understanding books about children of other countries.

*Boomba Lives in Africa.* Caroline Singer and Cyrus LeRoy Baldridge. Illus. by the authors. Holiday House, 1935. \$1.75.

Although fiction, minor incidents are based on observed life in an African village. In an introductory note the authors explain that the book is an attempt to "intimate" the "reasonableness of primitive life against its own exotic background." The book, therefore, has a value as a reference in social science work, as well as a literary value. And the illustrations are stunning!

*The Lost Caravan.* A Boys' Story of the Sahara. By Waldo Fleming. Illus. Doubleday, Doran, 1935. \$2.00.

The author has lived among the people of whom he writes—the Tuaregs of the Sahara. Setting and story are alike interesting. 12 and up.

### ONE VIEW OF ELEMENTARY ENGLISH

(Continued from page 67)

teach them thoroughly, holding the child responsible thereafter, and to use simple enough material to require only those which have been taught.

None of this need supersede delightful little plays, or reading, enjoying, and memorizing well chosen literature, but just as we have realized that a child cannot solve difficult arithmetic problems if

he has not mastered the multiplication table and the adding combinations, but can gain this power if he has the fundamentals, so he cannot have effective expression of his knowledge or emotions without the power of speaking and writing which can come only from much practice, based on something to say and a desire to say it well.

### EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 73)

conscripted, and so to realize, and make others realize that no normal child is at heart a killer, or can be made one except by brutal and selfish processes.

"Language is the great medium of peace," Dallas Lore Sharp once said to me. "No nation ever makes war upon another until diplomatic relations are broken." Promote, therefore, the interchange that young people may make with one another in all possible forms of language, particularly in the printed page, freely written and freely read. Let young

people of all countries grow up reading and writing of one another, and where possible, corresponding and conversing. Then the time will come and not until then that war will end. There may never be peace in the sentimental sense, for people will always engage in struggle of one kind or another among themselves. But they need not, and will not kill and murder if they freely read and write of one another, and correspond and converse as freely as letter and travel make possible.



# Shop Talk

## Dramatic Action in the Verse-Speaking Choir

FOREWORD: For some time the authors of this article have been gathering information for a national directory of all those in charge of choral speaking activities. In addition to the names of the leaders and schools, special data are being collected such as lists of poems, types of verse choirs, rhythmic movement, staging, size of groups, rôle of the leader, dramatization and evaluation of results. Letters may be addressed to Richard B. Lewis, Glendale Junior College, Glendale, California.

WHEN action is to be used with the choral interpretation of a poem, it usually should be used as a supplementary effect. In certain poems, such as "The House that Jack Built," the action is a major part of the interpretation and should be used for maximum effect. But acting and movement must never interfere with speech and rhythm demanded by the poem. Careful analysis of the poem should precede the rehearsal to determine the kind and quantity of action or pantomime that best carry out the effect originally intended by the author. Some of the ditties by Gilbert, "Koko's Song" from *The Mikado*, for example, can sustain a limited amount of action to increase the effectiveness of the poem. Generally, any action that is used should not be formalized by making it mechanically perfect. Here, as well as in the speaking of the poem, the individual should be allowed comparative freedom to interpret. "Jazz Fantasia," by Carl Sandburg, "The Congo," by Vachel Lindsay, and Rudyard Kipling's "Boots" all seem to demand some physical action in their interpretation, but each will not only call for differentiated treatment but will express the individuality of the members of the group. There are occasional poems to which formalized gestures may add much humor or emphasis. "The Family Drum Corps," by Douglas, or "At the Crossroads," by Hovey, gain in the co-ordination with formalized action.

The dance and the drama are frequently natural and inevitable developments of creative choral speech. Children unconsciously sway to infectious rhythms, and action and dancing are only a step removed. Sometimes the suggestion to do what the music or the thought of the poem tell them to do is needed to start them off, particularly if they have been moulded in the formal pattern of the traditional school. Adolescents and adults must accept the unity of artistic purpose in choral speech before

they can free themselves from the inhibitions built up by adult society. That is to say they must understand the significance of art.

Vachel Lindsay wrote many poem-games and dances. In some of them, as in the popular "Potatoes Dance," there is a central figure in the dance, with a supporting group to add mass, color, and line to the movement. In 1920 a group of us helped Vachel Lindsay present the "Potatoes Dance" in the public schools of Quincy, Illinois. Kindergarten children danced as snowdrops, raindrops, and leaves, while older children "jiggled and whirled and scrambled" as potatoes "in honor of the lady," a gossamer fairy moving through the delicate lines of the poem.

Isadora Duncan taught her pupils poem-dances, and recorded a part of her work in her notable book, *My Life*. After her death Lindsay wrote of her: "She danced poetry again and again without orchestra, singing, or music, and thought the reading of the poem music enough."

Stage positions of the choir members should also be adapted to the poem. For "The Congo" a straight line formation has been successfully used. In "Jazz Fantasia" a three row organization, the front row kneeling, the back row standing, is effective. No matter what formation is used—a semi-circle, a straight line, or a cluster grouping—the unity of the choir should be preserved. The group must work and feel both as a social organism and as a well integrated machine, each unit doing its special duty but thoroughly co-ordinated with the action of the whole body.

Staging the verse choir likewise provides possibilities limited only by the creative abilities of the director and his assistants. It is important, however, that the background should not assume major importance in the impression received by the audience. The poetry is always the content to be communicated. Content may be more effectively communicated by interesting and effective settings. Many have been devised for choir productions in which colored lights, gauze curtains plain or colored, costumes or robes, and in some instances mechanical sound effects have reinforced the group interpretation. In one instance reported, the Twenty-third Psalm was spoken in absolute darkness as the closing number on a program.

—Richard B. Lewis, Drama Department, Glendale, California, Junior College

—Holland D. Roberts, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, Public Schools

# Fifth Annual Meeting

of

## The National Conference on Research in Elementary School English

St. Louis, Missouri—February 22, 24, 25, 1936

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### Saturday, February Twenty-second

Noon and Early Afternoon { Luncheon and Reports of Committees  
Daniel Boone Room—Hotel Statler  
Reservations in advance (\$1.50) ; write the Secretary-Treasurer  
of The Conference

Presiding: B. R. BUCKINGHAM, President, Directing Editor of Elementary School Books, Ginn and Company, Boston.

*A Handbook of English Usage: A Manual of Style for Elementary School Teachers of English.*

Presentation—ROBERT POOLEY, Chairman, Assistant Professor of English, Wisconsin University. Report to be presented tentatively in the form of a specimen handbook—Grades 1 to 8 inclusive.

Discussion—ETHEL L. CORNELL, Psychologist, State Department of Education, Albany, N.Y.; LOU L. LABRANT, College of Education, Ohio State University, Columbus.

*The Evaluation of Research Problems. A Revision of the Report of 1935.*

Presentation—ETHEL MABIE, Chairman, Supervisor of the Department of Curriculum, Madison Public Schools, Madison, Wisconsin. A revision of the report of 1935.

Discussion—M. R. TRABUE, Director of Research, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; ELEANOR M. JOHNSON, Editorial Director, American Education Press, Columbus, Ohio.

*Current Research: Digest of Outstanding Research Published and Unpublished—A Continuation of the Report of 1935.*

Presentation—ANGELA BROENING, Chairman, Supervision and Research, Baltimore Public Schools, Baltimore, Maryland.

Discussion—JOSEPHINE MACLATCHY, College of Education, Bureau of Educational Research, Ohio State University; E. A. BETTS, Superintendent of Practice, State Normal School, Oswego, N.Y.

*Business:* Announcements by The Conference Secretary.

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### Monday, February Twenty-fourth

Four-thirty O'Clock { Business Meeting:  
Hotel Statler. Room, See Lobby Bulletin Board  
Active Members

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**Tuesday, February Twenty-fifth**

*Morning Meeting, Nine-Thirty O'clock* { Joint Meeting with  
The American Educational Research Association  
Room 9, Jefferson Hotel.

*Presiding:* B. R. BUCKINGHAM.

*Script Print in Relation to Beginning Reading and to Written Expression*—PRUDENCE CUT-RIGHT, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Minneapolis.

*Locating and Developing Higher Reading Processes*—WILLIS L. UHL, Dean of School of Education, University of Washington.

*How Much Word Knowledge Do Children Bring to Grade One?*—E. W. DOLCH, University of Illinois.

*Some Phases of Recent Research in Elementary Reading*—BESS GOODYKOONTZ, Assistant U. S. Commissioner of Education.

*Results of Individualized Procedures in Reading Instruction*—DONALD D. DURRELL, Boston University.

*Twelve O'Clock Noon* { Luncheon and Research Report Meeting  
Sections 1 and 2 Assembly Room—  
16th Floor, Hotel Statler.  
Reservations in advance (\$1.50) ; write the Secretary-Treasurer  
of the Conference

*Presiding:* B. R. BUCKINGHAM, *President.*

*Fourth Annual Research Bulletin: Research Related to the Teaching of Reading in the Elementary School.*

*Presentation*—DONALD D. DURRELL, Chairman, School of Education, Boston University, Boston.

*Critical Evaluations:* ARTHUR I. GATES, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York; WILLIAM S. GRAY, School of Education, University of Chicago; ERNEST HORN, Iowa State University, Iowa City; PAUL MCKEE, Colorado State Teachers College, Greeley.

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*President:* B. R. BUCKINGHAM, Directing Editor of Elementary School Books, Ginn and Company, Boston, Massachusetts.

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*Secretary-Treasurer:* C. C. CERTAIN, Wayne University, Detroit, Michigan.  
Convention Address: Hotel Statler.

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